



NPA *Bulletin*

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National Parks Association of the Australian Capital Territory Inc



**Tidbinbilla
recovering**



**Molonglo — where
the eagles nest**



**Horses impact on
Tantangara**



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

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From the President



The start of a new year always gives us a chance to reflect on where we've been and where we're going. It looked like 2009 was going to be another normal summer until February 7 when all hell broke loose in Victoria. Bushfires are something we have to get used to but not on

this scale, not at this speed and intensity, not with such devastating results. If we were tempted to think we were getting a handle on fire management in the ACT, we have been served a warning to think again. On the facing page of this *Bulletin* we pay tribute to Jenny Barnett, a staff member of Victoria National Parks Association and a long term campaigner for the bush, who lost her life in the Victorian bushfires. She will be sorely missed as the long running debate over how best to manage fire in the Australian bush escalates once again.

In all this sadness and anxiety though, we do need to acknowledge how much we achieved in 2008. The Symposium in May, *Corridors for survival in a changing world*, continued our work to publicise scientific research into fire management and other practical issues in the struggle to conserve our bush heritage. Our publications program scored

a success with the new orchid field book. Walks, car camping and work parties took us to some really interesting and different places and made for a very eventful year. General Meetings were a highlight of each month for me last year and this year's program will be even better. The 50th Anniversary Committee, ably led by Judy Kelly, has some exciting plans for next year already well in hand.

We lost some long-term members and good friends this year, people who have contributed so much to NPA ACT, but we celebrated their lives and their contribution to the community with profound gratitude that they shared their passion with us.

We lobbied the Government long and hard on the still unfinished Namadgi Management Plan, on their plans for Tidbinbilla and on the state of our parks and reserves which are becoming more vulnerable as the drought drags on. Although we know 2009 will be difficult economically, we wrote recently to the Chief Minister asking for additional funds in this year's Budget to restore some of the damage done by misuse, drought and vandalism. We need professional staff to control feral pests, to carry out restoration and conservation work on important cultural heritage sites and we need to educate people to understand the key role our hills and reserves play in conservation of our nation's biodiversity.

NPA ACT has taken on a wider role with Kevin McCue and myself on the executive of the National Parks Australia Council. We made several significant submissions to the Federal government on the *Environment Protection and*

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Victorian fires claim a passionate supporter of the bush

Dozens of tributes from all round Australia and from people in all walks of life have been placed on a special online dedication page set up by the Victorian National Parks Association for their researcher Jenny Barnett and her husband, Melbourne academic John Barnett, who were among the victims of the Black Saturday bushfires in Victoria. They were trapped when their car was engulfed in flames at Steels Creek in the Yarra Ranges on February 7.

Jenny Barnett played important roles in many campaigns as well as contributing and commenting on government environment and parks policies, including the ecological implications of bushfire planning.

VNPA executive director Matt Ruchel said she would be sorely missed both within the association and far beyond it. "She was a passionate supporter of Victoria's natural environment," he said. "Certainly her contribution to the protection of the environment and conservation is huge."

A former VNPA executive director and CEO of Bush Heritage Australia, Doug Humann, said Jenny was an esteemed colleague and friend of two decades. "She received the utmost admiration and respect from the range of people with whom she worked, particularly colleagues and supporters of VNPA, but more widely any number of people including members of

government departments and parliament.

"Jenny worked tirelessly for the Victorian environment and left no stone unturned for any clue or fact — or ant — that might interest her. She was scrupulous in her honesty and professionalism, detailed and precise in her research, and absolutely passionate and focused on her determined path. Many an appeals tribunal chair and even directors of VNPA have shifted in their seat seeing her coming!

"Jenny collaborated with an array of community and conservation groups on almost every terrestrial issue imaginable in Victoria over the last two decades. But beyond that she blooded more than one young and enthusiastic — and not so young but still enthusiastic — volunteer, many of whom have gone on to great achievement.

"Ironically, with a debate (hopefully reasoned) and a royal commission looming on the causes and responses to the fires which took the lives of Jenny and John, Victoria has lost in Jenny one of the finest advocates for sustainable fire management the state of Victoria has had in the last three decades."

NPA ACT tribute

The NPA ACT Vice President, Chris Emery, paid a tribute on behalf of the association. "We were saddened to hear of the loss of Jenny Barnett and her husband in the firestorms of last week,"

he wrote. "It was good to see the tribute and recognition of their work in *The Australian*. The National Parks Association of the ACT wishes to add its condolences, as well as its recognition and thanks for Jenny's work as a tireless advocate of conservation.

"Everyone in the ACT has been deeply affected by the Victorian firestorms, particularly those who experienced our 2003 fire storms."

Jenny's husband, Associate Professor John Barnett, a University of Melbourne endocrinologist and senior researcher with the Animal Welfare Science Centre, worked for more than 30 years to help improve animal welfare standards on long-distance transport and in the chicken and meat industries.

Senator Bob Brown said Jenny was "a magnificent Australian whose life's work and devotion to nature will continue to benefit us all."

Graeme Wicks

Our deep sympathy goes out to our friends and colleagues in VNPA, and indeed to all those people affected by the dreadful Victorian bushfires. Ed



Stockyard Spur footnote

In my article published in the last issue of the *Bulletin* (pp 6, 7) it was stated that the proposed upgrading of the Stockyard Spur fire trail and link track would provide a base for backburning in the event of a bushfire burning towards the Corin Dam catchment, but that it would not be used as a base for hazard reduction burning.

Parks Conservation and Lands have

since advised that, as part of the already existing fire management network, the trail and link track may in fact be used for hazard reduction purposes.

It should be noted, however, that prescribed burning can take place only under very specific circumstances and in a very controlled manner, and that opportunities are likely to be infrequent. In addition, the Commonwealth's

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act would need to be taken into consideration in approving and managing prescribed burns potentially threatening to the nearby Ramsar-listed wetlands.

Max Lawrence

From the President *(continued)*

Biodiversity Conservation Act late in 2008. We are hoping for a fairer, more conservation focussed Act to come out of the current review due to report later in the year.

So 2009 will be about getting out into the bush with our friends and

companions; enjoying the General Meetings; running the office, the Publications program and working for the environment in a dozen different ways. Our work will be sharpened by the tragedy of the Victorian bushfires but the important thing is for every member to

do their bit: bring a friend to a General Meeting; come to a work party; offer to lead a walk; join a committee. Whatever you do for the environment this year, it will make a difference.

Christine Goonrey

Molonglo

Where the eagles nest

Esther Gallant's walk in November 2008 through the Kama Nature Reserve (formerly a grazing property, "Kama") and along the lower Molonglo River corridor explored some of the significant areas affected by the planned urban development in the Molonglo Valley. A variation to the Territory Plan giving effect to the Molonglo development came into force in December last, just after our walk, so I will outline its provisions before returning with some remarks on the walk.

A draft variation to the Territory Plan to implement residential development in the Molonglo Valley was released in August 2007. There followed a period of public consultation — dominated by conservation concerns — and an inquiry by the Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Planning and Environment. The Government responded to the committee's recommendations in August 2008 and approved an amended variation to the Territory Plan. The National Capital Authority released a related amendment to the National Capital Plan.

The sketch map opposite outlines the land uses and some other features of the Molonglo area as now approved. In broad terms the residential development will extend from the Cotter Road in the south to William Hovell Drive in the north with a river corridor reserved throughout.

The Stromlo Forest Park forms the boundary in the south west which extends northwards through ridges and then along the Kama Nature Reserve to William Hovell Drive. The eastern boundary is formed by the National Arboretum and other reserves adjacent to the Tuggeranong Parkway. The plan also provides for broadacre areas further north of this residential area, adjacent to the suburb of Holt.

Earlier draft plans included provision for residential development between the Kama Nature Reserve and these broadacre areas (termed Central Molonglo), but the approved plan excludes this area from urban use. This is a key and welcome element of the current plan. A major arterial road is shown running from the Cotter Road in the south to William Hovell Drive near its junction with Coulter Drive in the north.

Within this overall plan detailed planning of services and individual suburbs is being undertaken, details of which are

shown at ACT Map I on the ACT Planning and Land Authority website. The first two Molonglo suburbs, Wright and Coombes, are currently being worked on and depending on land release requirements may be available by early 2010. Initial access to these suburbs will be from Coppins Crossing Road. Later suburb releases will follow in a broad south to north sequence.

The current plan incorporates some important changes from the earlier draft, including the exclusion of Central Molonglo from residential development, and the recognition of the need for a buffer zone between Kama Nature Reserve and urban areas to the east to be located outside the reserve. However, significant issues remain, many of which are related to the river corridor.

Lakes planned

The design of works required along the Molonglo River represents a major undertaking. The Government has made provision for relevant investigations to be made but these are unlikely to be complete before 2010. At present there is no provision to deal with untreated inflow from the Yarralumla Creek nor is there provision for any environmental flows.

Then there will be stormwater inflows from the new urban areas. Suggested schemes envisage the creation of a large lake, a series of small lakes along the river or the creation of off-river ponds. And in addition to these engineering requirements there remain the environmental and aesthetic implications and the need to make provision for the needs of future residents within what will be a crucial component of the Molonglo development. The establishment of a large lake in the valley would have far-reaching effects on the river environment. The need for adequate buffers and other protective measures remains.

Application of available water management techniques could permit the retention of a river environment similar to that now to be seen at Coppins Crossing and other places along the course of the lower Molonglo. It appears likely that decisions on the resolution of the river issue will be made at the ACT rather than at the Commonwealth level. Whatever is proposed, there will be a requirement for an Environment Impact Statement.

The management of the woodland areas both within and outside the development area remains an issue. The Standing Committee recommended that the remnant pockets of yellow box-red gum woodland be retained and managed for conservation purposes. Proposals made for the establishment of conservation leases to manage broad woodland such as Central Molonglo have been backed by the committee. This would involve the setting up of a new model for this purpose.

Other issues to be addressed include the adequacy of the Kama Nature Reserve as a wildlife corridor and whether arrangements for the continuing survey of raptor and other birdlife are satisfactory. The report of the Standing Committee and the Minister's responses to the committee's recommendations (available online) raise other matters and deserve further study.

It is important to recognise that, although a broad plan for Molonglo has been approved, decisions on some very important matters have not yet been made and that the realisation of the proposed development will stretch over a long period and will require issues to be revisited.

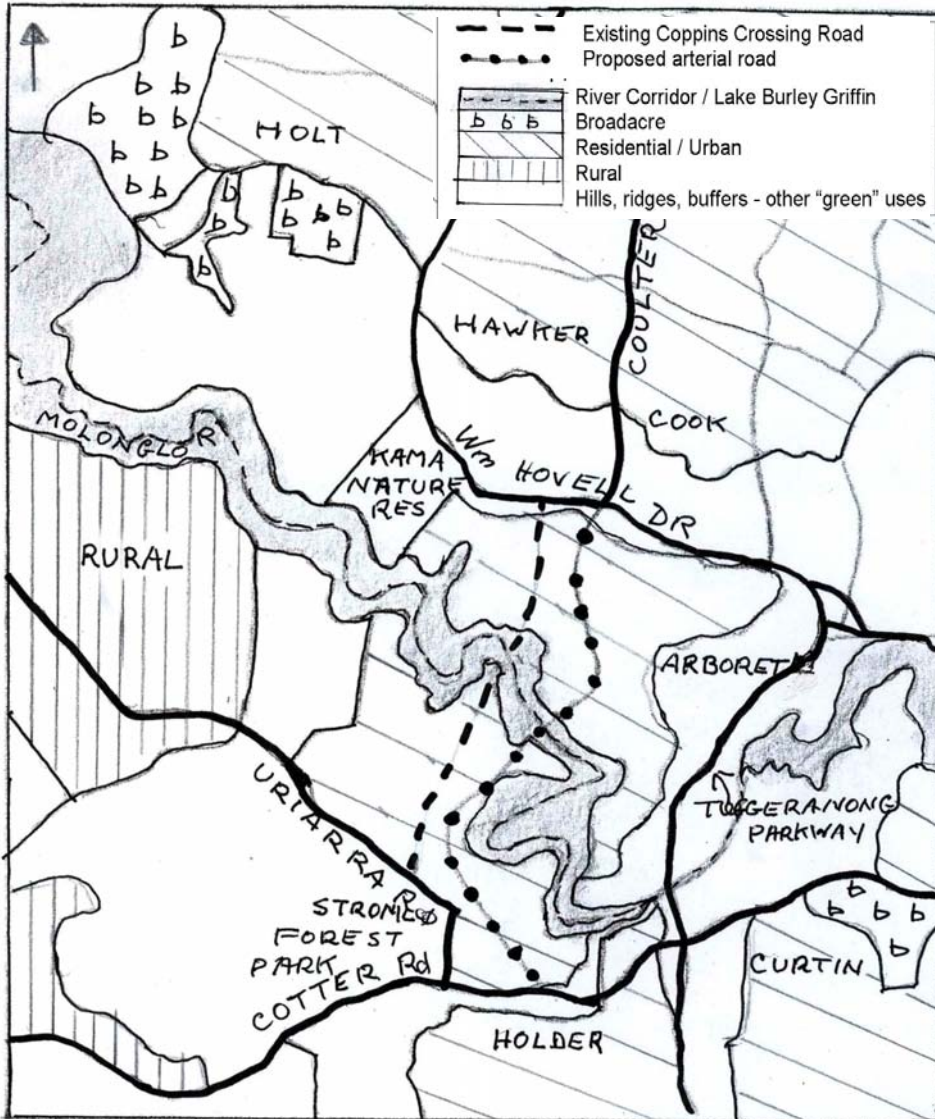
Eagle in nest

Esther started our walk from William Hovell Drive about two and a half km west of the Coppins Crossing Road junction. We headed in a generally southerly direction through the open woodland of the old Kama property towards the northern bank of the Molonglo which we reached near the junction of Deep Creek. Following an access road we moved downstream above the river then through the scrub to the river. There was a steady but light flow in the river and we soon faced a steep cliff-face on the far side.

There were a few taller trees in the valley, the tallest carrying a large, rough stick nest which, on more careful sighting, revealed a large fledgling eagle balanced on the edge and a second smaller nest a little higher up the trunk. Over lunch we tossed around some ideas about who might own the top storey, but rejected the suggestions and at the time of writing, the mystery remains unsolved. During our stay the eagle did not take to the wing but nevertheless

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MOLONGLO AREA - LAND USE December 2008



Photos. Above. Eagle's nest near the top of a dead Casuarina tree. Penthouse nest owner unknown.
Photo Max Lawrence

Below left. Syd Comfort, Adrienne Nicholson and John Kaye studying the young eagle, way up there!
Photo Max Lawrence

Below. Wandering through the Kama Woodland.
Photo Esther Gallant



provided a wonderful picture of what this part of the Molonglo has to offer.

Esther had come prepared with details of other special residents of the area, including times and temperatures favouring the flight of the sun moth, but

we had no sightings. However the image of the eagle on the edge of the tree-top nest, with an unidentified neighbour in the floor above, will continue to remind me of the particular values of this valley.

Syd Comfort

I would like to acknowledge the help of John Hibberd, Executive Director of the Conservation Council of the ACT Region. SFC

Vale Jean Currie

Just before Christmas, many NPA members were saddened to hear of the death of one of our long-time and well-loved members, Jean Currie. Jean died after a period of illness at the age of 85.

She was an essential member of one of the best double acts our family had met through membership of NPA which we joined in the early 1980s. The other half of the Currie double act was Jean's late husband Ian, a former President and distinguished life member of NPA.

The Thompsons first met Jean through going on many of the now legendary Currie car camps. These car camps were often to unusual and interesting places as many of our old photographs testify. Some trips were to properties of clients of Ian's dental practice. I thought it would be hard to say no to Ian's customary persuasiveness when he had a drill in your mouth.

Around the evening campfire many memories that Dianne and I, and in particular our children, will always remember included participating in many of the Currie games and quizzes with Jean being very much the foil to Ian's funnier acts.

There are also many memories on those trips of the familiar Currie Commer campervan which had (in the 1980s) a refrigerator where young children could often obtain a cold drink on a hot day. The refrigerator also provided a wonderful treat at hot Easter camps. Where the Thompson's Easter eggs had invariably melted, Jean and Ian produced solid intact eggs for those children attending.

The only time I can recall seeing Jean at the wheel of the Commer was at a car camp deep in the Tantawangalo Forest where at night we had viewed Halley's Comet. The evening before we left it had rained heavily and these conditions, together with some steep greasy uphills,

the Commer did not enjoy. With Jean at the wheel Ian, myself, our son Ben and several other members helped coax the van up the steeper greasier spots. This adventure only made the trip more enjoyable over laughs, coffee and cakes at the Nimmitabel bakery.

We also had contact with Jean in her professional capacity as head of the then ACT School Dental Program. In the 1970s and 1980s every primary school in the ACT had a school dental and baby health centre. It was a tribute to Jean's professional ability that the Tasmanian Government invited her to implement a similar scheme in that State in the late 1970s. This resulted in the Currie family doing many of the interesting and challenging bush walks there.

Raising a young family away from parental and family support was greatly helped through our membership of NPA. The Curries were, together with a number of other then older members, almost like surrogate grandparents to our children. A testimony to the affection our children have, is the flood of memories they recalled when I passed on the sad news of Jean's death. As well as NPA, Jean and Ian were active members of Canberra Ornithologists Group and it was through our contact with them, their encouragement and the knowledge they generously passed on to us, that my daughter Alice and I developed a keen interest in birdwatching.

In March 2007, thanks to the generosity of Jean's daughter Marian and son-in-law Geoff, Jean came on what was to be her last NPA car camp; at Wapengo on the Manning Clark property. An indication of her stoicism was that she had what must have been an uncomfortable night sleeping in the car. Through



the day Jean held court in a chair overlooking the lake, being provided with regular cups of tea by Dianne and other members.

In recent years Jean attended monthly NPA meetings, usually sitting in the front row showing a keen interest in the presentations. She generally had an interesting and pertinent question to ask. At these meetings, during my conversations with Jean, she always asked for news of our children.

Jean was actively involved in NPA right to the end. Only weeks before her death she contributed an excellent article to the *NPA Bulletin* (December 2008) on the drowning of Lake Pedder in retrospect.

Speaking on behalf of the Thompson family we will always have many affectionate memories of the kindness and generosity Jean (and Ian) Currie gave to us over a long period of time.

Gary Thompson

The Thompson family's fond memories of Jean are shared by all NPA members who knew her. Ed

Life Membership of the NPA ACT

The NPA ACT Constitution, Section 5 (1) Honorary Life Membership, states:

Any person who has rendered meritorious service to or on behalf of the Association, may, on the recommendation of the Committee, be elected a Life Member by a General Meeting, and for all purposes shall be considered a financial member of the Association.

Call for nominations

Nominations for 2009 close at the April general meeting.

Selection criteria guidelines may be obtained from the Chair of the working group.

Please send nominations, with supporting documentation to

Kevin McCue, Chair, NPA ACT Life Membership Working Group
36 Jalanga Crescent
Aranda ACT 2614



Sustainability and a wide brown land

Dr Denis Saunders is President of WWF–Australia and a member of the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists. He is a passionate man and one full of foreboding for his country's future. He was the guest speaker at the NPA ACT general meeting in November 2008. A summary of his talk follows.

Australians are disconnected from the land and do not nurture it. The Aboriginal legacy of caring for country has been set aside. The unique Australian ecology is being destroyed — asset stripped — without regard for sustainability. With the exception of the air over major cities, all features of the Australian environment are degrading. The price will be paid sometime in the future.

Ignorance of biodiversity is fundamental to the problem. Aspects of the concept are appreciated, such as conservation of rare or endangered species, and it is assumed that by creating special reserves, biodiversity is saved. Dr Saunders illustrated the concept with a Gary Larson cartoon showing the African veldt with numerous glass jars scattered over it. Each jar contains different animals: rhinos, lions, gnus. A tourist is being conducted across the plain, inspecting the jars: “*Biodiversity preserves*”.

But biodiversity is more complex. It concerns the variety of all life forms, their interactions and the environment. There are three interactive levels: genetic, species and ecosystem diversity. The species-preservation view, illustrated above, is ecological apartheid as it does not allow for exchanges between different compartments. Ecosystem processes such as oxygen production, soil formation, nutrient cycling, maintenance of hydrological cycles and amelioration of climate, are ignored. Systems are degraded and lost.

Survival needs biodiversity

Why conserve biodiversity? Our survival depends on biodiversity as some of its elements provide the critical life support systems that make human life possible: maintenance of the air we breathe, production of fresh water, formation of soils, cycling of nutrients, disposal of wastes. Because the processes are held in common, they are taken for granted.

Biodiversity provides great economic benefits: food and fibre, medicines, building materials. However, only a limited subset of biodiversity provides us with economic returns. Dr Saunders illustrated with grasses: of about 9000 described species, only five (wheat, corn,

rice, barley, sorghum) provide more than half the calories consumed by humans.

Less tangible but important benefits derive from biodiversity. Cultural identity, spiritual enrichment, the Australian ‘sense of place’ — its distinctive character and colouring — come directly from biodiversity. As do recreational and tourist activities.

From an ethical viewpoint, conservation and maintenance of biodiversity are important for intergenerational equity, no generation has the right to appropriate Earth’s resources solely for its own benefit. We are presently following Groucho Marx: “Why should I do anything for future generations, what have they ever done for me?”

Dr Saunders said we do not even know what we are destroying. We have little idea of what biodiversity was present in Australia in 1788 and not much better idea of what is present now. Even at species level, guestimates are constantly confounded as possibly fewer than 10 per cent of species have been formally identified. The only areas in which we can be confident of what exists are mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians, with a reasonable grip on flowering plants. A study of arthropods (insects, spiders, crustaceans) by Recher and Majer showed huge gaps in our knowledge. Even less is known about micro-organisms.

Australia is biotically rich with a high level of endemism. Of the 20 000 plant species described in Australia, 85 per cent originally occurred nowhere else. However, the record of protecting biodiversity is poor. The 1996 *State of the Environment Report* found habitat destruction was proceeding at an alarming rate. The record on mammal extinctions is the world’s worst.

The breakdown in ecosystem processes, which supply the support systems on which we depend, poses our most critical environmental issues. Climate change will make these problems harder to solve.

Biodiversity and soil

Land use is critical. Soil fertility is the basis of primary production. Pastoralism, agriculture and forestry depend heavily on biodiversity goods. Soil degradation commonly results from the loss of biodiversity — the loss of “free” ecosystem services that biodiversity provides. Acidification, salinisation, compaction, loss of structure (and water infiltration) and erosion are serious problems.

The loss of native vegetation impacts

on ecosystem functioning. Water once absorbed by native vegetation is entering groundwater and rising water tables are bringing salt to the surface. There is now no surface potable water in south western Australia and a similar situation is developing in the Murray–Darling Basin. Changes in vegetation have also affected the surface flow of wind, further degrading the land.

As biodiversity is lost, ecosystems become less complex. In a cascading effect, systems become less resilient, unable to absorb environmental shocks. Impacts from drought, fire and climate change are less easily buffered.

Does it matter if we lose species? If so, how many? The trouble is, said Dr Saunders, we do not know how many species we can lose before ecosystem function is significantly affected; yet we do know that some species have direct functional significance. A small example is honeyeater pollination of plants.

To economists the environment is a subset of the economy, not the other way around. The environment heavily subsidises the production of food and fibre. No account is taken of environmental degradation; the situation must change. Similarly with water. Otherwise, future generations will pay.

The problem is wider. Many people believe food comes from supermarkets and water from taps with no idea of the environmental costs of production. We need to reduce pressure on the environment by addressing our demands on it and by addressing human population issues. We need to inculcate the idea of stewardship in managers of natural resources and to implement conservation and biodiversity strategies in areas outside formal conservation zones.

As alluded to above, maintenance of biodiversity cannot be achieved simply by designating areas for that purpose. Areas already set aside frequently represent our impoverished soils, drier zones, steeper slopes. Woody grasslands are poorly conserved.

Ultimately we need a society that decides enough is enough. Further loss of biodiversity is inevitable: we must decide what level of intervention is necessary to minimise these losses. We must diversify our assets, not put all our eggs in one basket.

Dr Saunders hoped that his children would inherit a world where other species no longer live under threat of extinction to subsidise the existence of *Homo sapiens*.

Brian Slee

Taking a fresh look at Tidbinbilla



Although the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve is on Canberra's doorstep I avoided visiting the reserve for any length of time after the 2003 fires. I knew it had been severely hit and thought it would be depressing to spend much time there. As well, I doubted whether in any case there would be much to see and do. This opinion changed in the second half of 2008 when I began researching a new bushwalking guide intended to cover both Namadgi National Park and Tidbinbilla. I quickly realised that with Tidbinbilla there was a stand-alone book waiting to be written. Publication is not that far off and the book will cover 20 walks in all.

The reserve has recovered remarkably well, whether by natural regeneration or human-assisted programs of rehabilitation, and while scars remain the casual visitor would be hard-pressed to realise that a catastrophe occurred here just six years ago.

There are telltale signs however: long lines of grey on the slopes of hills and mountains denote dead trees, killed in the fires. Scores of boulders previously concealed by foliage now stand out on the slopes like so many ancient bones. Out on the walking trails there is more evidence in blackened trunks, dead trees and cracked and flaking boulders. And while much restoration work has been done, knowledgeable visitors will realise that two pisé cottages open to the public were gutted in the blaze.

Splendid replacement

Before the fires swept through the reserve I loved the boardwalk and bird hides at Tidbinbilla, set among a system of ponds in which waterbirds foraged. Boardwalk and hides were obliterated in 2003, but what has been developed since is splendid in the imagination displayed in its conception and execution. Known as The Sanctuary, it is a large, enclosed area with a walking trail through the wetlands to which various waterfowl species, of irresistible fascination, have returned. Sealed paths, bridges and boardwalks make up the trail, easy to do, while two offshoot tracks among boulders and bush add variety.

There's a brush-tailed rock wallaby

enclosure within the Sanctuary, in which six of these elusive creatures reside. A captive breeding program for the northern corroboree frog is under way and a treetop walk is planned, but not until 2010 although when he announced it, in May 2008, Chief Minister Jon Stanhope said it would be built "soon". Parts of the Sanctuary do have a raw feel to them, but once extensive plantings develop this should disappear. Environmental messages abound, maybe excessively.

Pisé cottages open

I said both pisé cottages, Nil Desperandum and Rock Valley, are open to visitors and while this true, getting to Nil involves a rather tedious slog up and down along old forestry roads after first crossing the Tidbinbilla River (I was amazed that it was dry in January 2009). Much of the route into Nil is steep and the chance of taking a wrong turning among the swirl of dusty roads is real. For this reason, if this is to remain the route, I have advocated a footbridge over the river and the occasional direction post.

All these roads were once part of a vast softwood enterprise known as Block 60, covering 487ha, which has now been incorporated into the nature reserve and given the name Jedbinbilla, said to be an Aboriginal word anglicised into Tidbinbilla — a place where boys became men, referring to initiation ceremonies. Destruction of this forestry plantation, whose development caused such a gruesome scarring of the Tidbinbilla Range, was one welcome outcome of the fires of 2003.

Many walks within the reserve are short, but for all that none are without interest. One leads to Black Flats Dam, a large sheet of water in an idyllic setting ideal for picnics and bird watching. I thought it must have been a settler's creation, but instead it was developed by TNR staff and, like the Sanctuary, attracts waterbirds. Platypuses are there as well. Likewise, the brief Hanging Rock trail takes you up to an enormous overhanging boulder, a camp site for indigenous people hundreds of years ago. The Turkey Hill trail is but an amble

There are expansive views from Gibraltar Rocks. Photo Max Lawrence

too, but wonderful views are to be had up there.

Most people would remember Lucky, the sole survivor of the reserve's koala population of 20 caught up in the fires. She received loving care, but in 2008 old age caught up with her and she was put down to spare her more suffering. These days seven koalas from Kangaroo Island live in the koala enclosure where there's a short Koala Path. They're hard to spot though. You could combine the Koala Path with the Peppermint Track within the enclosure, which is longer.

Views that astound

Other walks are hard, at least in my eyes. Camel Back takes around four hours there and back and has punishing climbs. Despite all this puffing and panting most walkers will go on to bash themselves a bit more by taking on the grueling ascent to the summit of the Camels Hump, although it is on the ascent rather than on top that you get fine views. I have suggested there should be a marked trail to the top, if only to protect the surrounding environment from slipping and sliding boots. Further on, also reached only on foot, is Pierce Trig, outside the reserve, but like the Camels Hump having views that astound.

Gibraltar Peak with its massive tors is well known, while if you continue down past this peak you will arrive at Mushroom Rock, another grouping of boulders of which one balanced on another is the source of the name. The route plunges in places and the return is demanding. I have suggested an easier approach from the Corin Road. Mushroom Rock, also outside the reserve, raises the question of what is to happen to a sort of no-man's-land between the eastern boundary of Tidbinbilla and the Corin Road. Pines once grew there, but I guess the fire put paid to them. Maybe inclusion within the TNR is a possibility, with the Tidbinbilla boundary then being the Corin Road. Pretty neat, eh?

(continued next page)

A day trip to Elaine Mine

While not promising the riches of the fabled King Solomon's Mines, Elaine Mine near Kiandra gave the five NPA members who visited it in early November rewards of a far more significant and lasting kind.

The route we followed to the mine was that described by Harry Hill in his book *Best Bushwalks in Kosciusko (sic) National Park*. This route follows the tops of the broad ridges from Selwyn ski area for about 6 km. Although the snow gums are fire-affected and offer little shade these days, the next generation of walkers will be able to enjoy their vibrant regrowth. The bright and clear day offered views to Tabletop Mountain and Mount Jagungal in addition to the closer detail of the valley of Four Mile Creek.

We left the Tabletop Mountain Fire Trail after about 90 minutes and proceeded directly to the mine site on Bloomfield Creek — a distance of slightly more than 1 km and a descent of some 140 m.

The mine started operation in the latter half of the 19th century as a sluicing operation and was called South Bloomfield diggings. The associated water races, shafts, holding dam and



sluicing works were the first of our visit sites as we descended to the creek. The extent of the works is impressive by any standard, but considering the era and the remoteness of the location, they are truly amazing.

As the alluvial gold ran out, some intrepid miners reasoned that the gold bearing ore was probably located beneath the sluiceway so proceeded to drive an adit from the bank of the creek horizontally for some 300 m. This operation was known as Elaine Mine and operated until 1936.

The tailings prominently show the site of the adit from half way down the slope. The mixture of red and grey material juts into Bloomfield Creek and has caused it to divert around the site. The mine area itself is littered with the paraphernalia of mining — ore carts, wheels of same, valve housings, metal for the manufacture of screens. Some of the more “portable” items seem to have found another life while the stacks of adit timbers have all but succumbed to the 2003 fires.

After a period for exploration and some lunch we commenced our return via Bloomfield Creek and Four Mile Hut. Only a few tens-of-metres from the mine site we paused to examine a bullock-drawn Garrett steam engine. Its separation from the mine site proper suggests that it was either being delivered to or recovered from the mine. However, its front axle and wheels are located at the mine, which further complicates the plot. Regardless of the

Photos. Top right. Garrett steam engine. Left. Elaine Mine holding dam.

Photos Martin Chalk



sequence of events, one wonders at the doggedness of those souls who got it as far as they did.

The traverse across rising ground from Bloomfield Creek to Four Mile Hut presented no problems and allowed us to avoid the steep climb along our route of arrival. Our outbound route took us to Four Mile Creek above the hut and allowed us to see the remains of the mining operations in this area. Although remote from Cooma or any other centre of population of the day, I can't help but feel that the area would have had numerous people working it, and today's sense of isolation would probably not have been feature a century ago.

Afternoon tea was taken at Four Mile Hut (for that, read a muesli bar and swig from the water bottle). We then followed the conventional route back to Selwyn via Yan's Sliprails and the firetrail.

Our day in the park was completed by a cuppa at Adaminaby followed by a leisurely drive home through Namadgi in the gloaming.

Martin Chalk

Taking a fresh look at Tidbinbilla *(continued)*

When this article was written, two trails, Lyrebird and Cascade, remained closed because safety-based tree felling and lopping were still going on. However, reopening was not far off and I am sure these two tracks will add further lustre to the Tidbinbilla experience. Not to be forgotten either is an imaginative children's playground (a flying fox is a drawcard), which has proved to be a hit with families. Rangers tell me of families that return again and again, simply because the kids enjoy mucking about there so much.

If you haven't been out there for a while you should visit Tidbinbilla and take a look at its attractions. It adjoins Namadgi, but is different in its approach

and appeal. Being smaller, more compact in its valley fringed by mountains, it is more comprehensible than mighty Namadgi.

Graeme Barrow

Note that the Plan of Management for Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve is currently under review. A Discussion Paper was released for public comment in December, and NPA ACT has provided a detailed submission, which can be accessed on the NPA website

www.npaact.org.au Ed

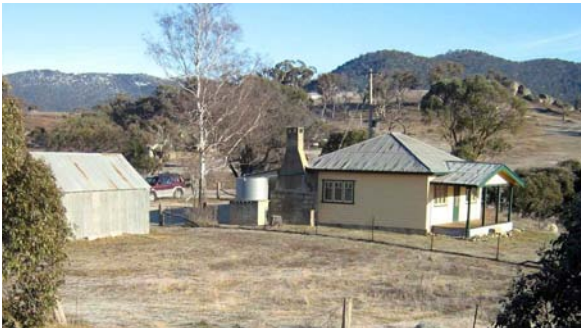


Ashbrook fire trail, Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve.

Photo Max Lawrence

2008 Christmas parties at Gudgenby

NPA ACT Christmas party



*Gudgenby Readycut or Managers Cottage.
Photo Max Lawrence.*

NPA's traditional Christmas party was held on Sunday December 14 at the newly restored "Readycut Hut" at Gudgenby. This well-appointed cottage, which now features electricity and a real flushing loo with a view, is just across the river from Gudgenby Homestead. It was a delightful venue for our celebrations. The weather was somewhat cool and a bit windy, but this was a very pleasant change from the sometimes hot and thirsty conditions experienced at previous parties.

Turnout was excellent, as usual. Heads were not officially counted, but forty or fifty was probably near the mark. What was especially noticeable was the number of very welcome happy new faces that turned up to join the usual suspects.

What **was** officially counted was the dollars raised in the now traditional auction of camping, hiking, household and sundry other gear donated by our

worthy members. This amounted to \$800, similar to last year's excellent result, and truly a credit to the generosity of the many members who came with something and in many cases went away with

something else. Our Treasurer unfortunately could not make it to the party but made it known afterwards that he was very happy.

Thanks especially go to Christine Goonrey and her committee for the very warm welcome extended to members, to Adrienne Nicholson for her usual excellent catering, to Tim Walsh, Max Lawrence and Judy Kelly for running the auction, and to all of those present for sharing their excellent company with us at Christmas time. It was also nice to be joined by rangers Bernard Morris (who bought a tent at the auction!) and Ollie Orgill.



*Above. Part of the crowd out of the wind on the verandah and in front of the cottage.
Below. Max and Tim as chief auctioneer and assistant.*

Photos Esther Gallant



Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group work and Christmas party

Nine members took part in the Gudgenby Work Party held on December 13 2008. The morning was spent removing St John's wort and cutting and dabbing briars around Frank and Jack's Hut. The St John's wort was quite bad and some patches of briar were too extensive to cut and dab. They will

need spraying which was not possible that day because it was too windy.

The morning's hard work was followed by the traditional Christmas lunch in the hut. Good food was abundant and Kevin McCue even managed to arrange for a bottle of red wine to make all too brief an appearance

before disappearing. We were fortunate to have Rangers Dave Whitfield and Ollie Orgill join us for lunch.

Dave kindly gave us an afternoon treat showing many of us the nearby Hospital Creek Hut for the first time — Fiona MacDonald Brand had not been there for many years and found it interesting to see again.

Photos of the GBRG Christmas lunch in Frank and Jack's Hut.

Fiona MacDonald Brand



The hut was in good condition, and the swamp where Hospital Creek starts was lovely and green. It would be a great spot to camp one day. Brian Slee carried his trusty mattock on the walk and was able to show its worth when a number of briars were found. All agreed it had been a very worthwhile day.



It's all happening for 2010

NPA ACT's 50th Anniversary is just around the corner!

Subgroups have started working towards NPA ACT's 50th anniversary celebrations in 2010. We need and welcome helpers on our sub-committees; specific tasks will become more evident as we make progress.

Public meeting at the National Film and Sound Archive

Date: Monday 1 March 2010

Venue: National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA) Theatre

The NFSA (which was The Institute of Anatomy at the time of the NPA's first meeting there) has confirmed our booking and is interested in organising a working partnership for the celebrations. Discussions with NFSA are continuing.

We hope to have as our guest speaker, Professor Richard Shine (of the University of Sydney) who won an NPA ACT school essay competition in June 1966 with his entry entitled *The red-bellied black snake*. Professor Shine has shown interest and a willingness to speak but cannot commit himself yet.

Photographic exhibition

Co-ordinators: Martin and Robyn Chalk (6292 3592-h) and Chris de Bruine.

Objective: to showcase the NPA by displaying images of the environment we seek to protect and people actively engaging with that environment.

Subject matter: natural and cultural heritage; people engaged in walks/work parties.

Keep an eye on *Burning Issues* and the association's website for details and conditions of entry. Localities are not

limited to Namadgi but may include any area regularly visited by NPA-organised activities. Physical dimensions of prints to A4 (or near equivalent) – no very small or very large images.

The photographic exhibition team will need help to mount the photographs as 2010 approaches (contact co-ordinators).

Two members are looking for quality display boards that don't cost the earth. Anyone have any suggestions?

Photographs may also be reproduced in the special 50th anniversary NPA *Bulletin*.

Symposium

Convenor: Kevin McCue (6251 1291-h).

Venue: probably the CSIRO Discovery Centre.

Kevin has already suggested themes for the 2010 symposium but ideas and help are welcome.

Publications Sub-committee

Sabine Friedrich (6249 7604-h) is organising a special anniversary logo.

A proposal has been put to the Sub-committee to produce a small booklet dedicated to Nancy Burbidge's *Eyes or No Eyes*, an informative series Dr Burbidge produced in early *Bulletins*.

Special 50th anniversary issue of the *Bulletin*

Contacts: Judy Kelly (6253 1859-h) and Annette Smith (6286 2984-h) with the *Bulletin* Sub-committee.

Annette and Judy have been combing through early NPA ACT Annual General Meeting reports and minutes at the Woden Heritage Library. We have unearthed all sorts of interesting bits and pieces. We're also attending short

courses at the National Library on how to use and access their resources.

Foundation and later members have been contacted and asked to write about relevant topics. Written contributions remain at just one so far. Please get your thoughts going. The deadline is the end of June so that we can sift through contributions and collaborate with the Sub-committee.

Commentary that accompanied an audio-visual presentation that the late Glyn Lewis assembled on the then Gudenby Nature Reserve, has been located. Slides for the AV may have been returned to their owners. Does anyone recall lending slides for the AV or have them still? (please let us know).

Scanning back copies of the NPA *Bulletin*

Contact: Mike Bremers (6292 3408 h).

The aim is to have **all** issues of the association's *Bulletins* available in electronic form on our website, hopefully indexed and in searchable form.

The Namadgi book

Contacts: Christine Goonrey (6231 8395-h) and Amanda Caldwell.

This project is in the early stages and a progress report will be given later.

Ideas for these projects, and offers of assistance with any of them, are welcome; contact a Committee member or the contacts shown.

Judy Kelly
50th anniversary Coordinator
(6253 1859-h) or
judy.kelly@tpg.com.au



The dinner at the NPA's Symposium last May provided a wonderful opportunity for many, including Dianne Thompson (left), to catch up with Jean Currie who died just before Christmas. With Jean is her daughter Marian Millard. See tribute to Jean by Gary Thompson on page 6.

Whip snakes and pencil pines — a retrospective

At the end of January 2008, Dave, Murray and I walked across Tasmania's Central Plateau, south from the drying beech forest of the Higgs Track near Deloraine, to the parched surroundings of Windy Ridge Hut on the Overland Track. It was a nostalgic trip because we were following almost the same route we'd taken with some of our family 30 years ago. It was also memorable for its scenery, peace and tranquility, and the fact that, except at the Walls of Jerusalem, we had the plateau mostly to ourselves.

Our first two days took us over undulating country past Westons Lake and Lake Nameless against the backdrop of Mt Ironstone. We spent our first night in the dark but comfortable Ironstone Hut and next day climbed Forty Lakes Peak for a panoramic view over countless lakes gouged out during the last Ice Age, to the Walls of Jerusalem, mainly dolerite country.

From Ironstone Hut, we followed a route marked intermittently with lichen-covered cairns through a maze of small lakes. The subalpine rockery with juvenile and mature pencil pines and the low bushes reminded me of a Japanese garden. We saw the transparent native shrimp, *Anaspides*, which is endemic to Tasmania's high lakes.

Pencil pine skeletons, remnants of a fire, stabbed the sky with their thin, bleached trunks and were a reminder of the tree's fragility: many are more than a thousand years old but fire kills them.

At lunch we watched a family of ducks with ducklings swimming in their haven. Pink trigger plants grew in clumps on the lakes' spongy shorelines

while little whip snakes moved in frantic s-bends like tiny toys fired by electronic impulses.

After a long afternoon, we crested a small scrubby rise at six o'clock in the evening and there was our destination, Lake Tyre, winking in the evening sun.

We pitched our tents near alpine cushion plants and once our noisy stove was stifled, listened to the lake's lap-lapping and the black currawong's plaintive cry. While sunset gilded the trees and misty clouds, vicious, mean ants disturbed our Nirvana.

Day three

The next day, our third, we crossed partially dry wetland, meeting two fishermen and a woman with bad blisters. Had they carried and cooked the freshly caught trout they kindly offered us, we'd have accepted it.

We approached the Walls of Jerusalem, the hub of the Central Plateau. The clear day with brilliant blue sky threw the gnarled bluffs and scree slopes of the West Wall, Mt Jerusalem, and The Temple into relief, emphasising the green cones of pencil pines and the soft lawn near Dixon Hut. In the 1930s cattleman Reg Dixon built the slab hut which features in Simon Cubit's *Snarers and Cattlemen of the Mersey High Country*, a history of the early bushmen who worked on the Central Plateau.

After lunch we climbed The Temple, meeting an increasing number of people. The Parks Service had employed a Scottish stonemason to lay the beautifully graded path up to The Temple and to teach others his skills. Along the way we had a serendipitous



View from The Temple past the end of the West Wall and over the Pool of Salome. Photo Dave Kelly

meeting with our friend Polly and her Hobart Walking Club friends.

We settled on the top of The Temple in the cold wind and scrutinised the peaks and valleys, including the Du Cane range beyond the Overland Track. We could see Lake Salome to the north-east with the main track to the Walls of Jerusalem coming in from the car park.

After descending from The Temple, we followed a mushy route down Jaffa Vale to Lake Ball with its flock of black swans. We joined Polly's party who were camped on high ground above the lake. Because their spot had the drawback of ants, colloquially known as jumping jacks, we camped lower down, close to the shoreline and enjoyed our first early camp of the trip.

Fourth day

On day four we left the Hobart group to walk along the clearly defined track past Lakes Adelaide and Meston. We followed Lake Adelaide in the shade of dry eucalypt forest, listening to the water and watching the ripples and foam drifting in to shore where it settled on rocks and defied disintegration. Pink trigger plants again featured colourfully and spidery Tasmanian waratahs, similar to the Monga waratah, faded by the wayside. Sensing us, an echidna froze into the ground.

Bothersome big flies stung us as we ate lunch next to the water. After crossing the low saddle between the two lakes, we reached a beautiful white pebbly beach at the north-easterly end of



A lake with pencil pines. Photo Dave Kelly

(continued)

Overnight Mount Tennant pack walk

On 21–22 December 2008 (summer solstice) I led a group of four on an overnight walk from the Namadgi Visitor Centre to Mt Tennant. The aim was to have a relatively short walk, watch the sunset, Canberra lights and sunrise whilst still allowing time for Christmas shopping, or other equally pleasant chores, on Saturday morning and Sunday afternoon.

Originally it looked like I would only have Norman Morrison for company but on Saturday morning he rang to say that his daughter Suzie and her partner Zac would like to join us for the walk.

We left the Namadgi Visitor Centre at about 3:45 pm. It was quite cool for a summer's day, but the sweat flowed as we made our way up along the Alpine Walking Track towards the summit. We were glad that it was not any warmer. We decided to camp at the grassy saddle about 1 km to the north west of the summit and then walked to the summit to collect water from the tank



*Above. Canberra lights from Mt Tennant.
Below. Watching the sun set on Canberra from Mt Tennant.
Photos Mike Bremers*



and admire the views. After returning to the tents we headed about 100 m to the east to a rock slab that gave us views to the north east towards Canberra.

Here we had a very pleasant time as we watched the lengthening shadows as the sun set and then the lights of Canberra came on as we ate our tea and sipped some wine. It was early to bed (9 pm) because we wanted to be up early (5:30 am) to watch the sunrise.

It was partly cloudy in the morning but this added an extra element of interest to the view as we had breakfast. We then packed up and by 10 am we were back at the car at the Visitor Centre to complete a very enjoyable walk.

Other options for such a walk could include camping on a flat area just off the fire trail a few hundred metres from the summit in amongst tall unburnt trees and/or to do the trip at the winter solstice.

Mike Bremers

Whip snakes and pencil pines — a retrospective *(continued)*

Lake Meston with its clear azure waters. A paddle refreshed our feet and souls in the heat.

At 6:00 pm we saw a lichen-covered sign indicating “hut” and pitched our tent near it.

In 1979, we'd met Robert Reed, mentioned in Cubit's book, whose family had built Junction Lake Hut. Then well into his seventies, he'd ridden his horse to the hut with a young friend. He shared a billy of tea with us in front of his fire while mist and rain enveloped Junction Lake and Dave lay in his tent recovering from a stomach upset.

Mr Reed had then set off with us during a lull in the rain. He admonished me for wearing shorts as he waved his stick at the grass, speaking about the perils of snakebite. He led us to a green tunnel of beech forest, the route down

the Mersey River to the Never Never. He also showed us the way up to the Traveller Range.

This trip, to beat the heat next day, we farewelled Junction Lake and its resident swans at 8:00 am and took the

Never Never route alongside the Mersey.

We followed the shady beech forest along a track that came and went, over roots, through scrub, past waterfalls and thirsty-looking lichens growing on beech tree trunks.

Dave's navigation brought us to the “highway” that

is the Overland Track.

Goodbye Central Plateau. We hope to marvel at your ancient and splendid wonders again.

Judy Kelly



Cattleman's hut near Lake Meston. Photo David Kelly

Pack walk around Quiltys Mountain



East of Quiltys. Photos Philip Gatenby

Quiltys Mountain in the Budawangs is a sandstone plateau about 4 km across at its widest, seemingly named after two brothers who used to graze cattle there early last century. In September last year, five of us (my companions were Neville, Steve, Mary and Ray) spent three days visiting some of the area's attractions.

The walk started from the northern end of the Alum Creek Firetrail and was partly off track. The first day involved getting to Piercy Clearing, where in 1895 Mark Piercy built a cabin (Budawang Committee 1982).

Soon after leaving the firetrail we crossed a disused water race, then a small gorge formed by Running Creek. The creek was living up to its name. The scrub thickened considerably as we passed to the north of Round Mountain but relented once we were across the Round Mountain Firetrail, just before joining the Endrick River Track.

We passed a plaque indicating that the area we were in and another nearby, totalling 2086 ha, had recently been added to Morton National Park through a legacy of Catherine Clare "Kitty" White, 1912–2002, a "woman who loved the Australian bush".

Sallee Creek, our next obstacle, was wide and cold and could only be crossed by wading.

At the Endrick River we stopped for lunch near what used to be the site of the Burrill and Davis dam and the start of the previously mentioned water race, which went to goldfields on the Shoalhaven over 20 km away (Budawang Committee 1982). The dam had a

short history. Construction started in 1889 but when almost complete the following year it was mostly washed away and the project then lapsed due to the 1890s depression (Budawang Committee 1982).

After lunch we continued east across Nomchong and then Blackets Creek to the north of Quiltys Mountain. We had a last look at the

Endrick near the track's junction with the Red-grounds Track then turned south-east and walked between Quiltys Mountain and the Galbraith Plateau to Piercys Clearing where we spent a cold night. Two parallel piles of stones are all that's left of Piercy's cabin.

Bora ground

The start of the walk next morning was uphill to The Vines where the Endrick River Track turns east to Newhaven Gap. The Vines was also the home of the White Cat Sawmill (Doughton 1989). Our route led south onto an overgrown track. Just past the turn-off, a cairn beside an enormous fallen tree marked a footpad to the west which went over a knoll and through a stand of Pigeon House ash (*Eucalyptus triflora*) to the side of Quiltys Mountain where more cairns marked a scramble up to a bora ground. As the climb progressed there were fine views of the eastern

Budawangs. The bora ground, which Europeans first saw in 1932 (Doughton 1989), is on the eastern edge of Quiltys Mountain.

We then decided to look for the Endrick Trig which marks

the summit of Quiltys, 2 km to the west according to the map. After an hour of unsuccessful searching, in at times thick scrub, we returned to the bora ground and then to The Vines. The track from The Vines descends through patches of rainforest and crosses a number of creeks. A bit over 2 km beyond The Vines it climbs then levels off in moist eucalypt forest shortly before the turn-off to Hidden Valley, marked by a large tree fern with the letters "HV" carved into the side.

Signs are that the junction is a popular campsite, perhaps increasingly so now that camping in Hidden Valley is not permitted. The valley is a 15-minute walk from the tree fern. Where it's first entered, there is a campsite which still seems to be used. What was once a popular campsite a couple of hundred metres north of the entrance now appears less frequented and shows signs of regeneration. Once back on the main track we continued to the Styles Creek crossing to camp.

Another cold night was followed by a sunny morning with thick frost and patches of mist. The track across Styles Plain was swampy in some places where it skirted to the north of Hoddles Castle and under water in others, particularly just beyond the Sallee Creek crossing, about an hour's walk from Styles Creek. North from the creek it leads through forest on the eastern side of Fosters Mountain. After about another hour we reached the Round Mountain Track, which we walked along northwards for a kilometre. Our route off-track across to the Alum Creek Firetrail led us over Grassy Creek, then Little Grassy Creek (where we stopped for lunch) and

(continued next page)



Quiltys from Styles Creek

Camping and horses in northern KNP

The Parks Service has started the process of implementation of the 2006 Kosciuszko National Park (KNP) Plan of Management (KPOM).

Chapter 8— *Recreation* states the following in relation to Camping and Horse Riding:

At all vehicle-based camping areas where horses are permitted horses are to be kept at least 50 m (it is 30 m for campers without horses) from any river, stream, lake, hut or camping area used by campers without horses unless in a designated permanent horse yard constructed by the Service ...

Horse riders must comply with the *Australian Alps Horse Riding Code* and other relevant codes. Campers without horses are encouraged to adopt responsible camping behaviour through the promotion and distribution of the Australian Alps minimal impact camping code. The Alps code *Where and However you ... Camp* now covers all recreational users and states “Small groups (4-8) are more fun for all.”

The Service will monitor the environmental and social impacts at popular horse riding areas and all vehicle-based camping areas where horses are permitted and set impact thresholds. If monitoring indicates that unacceptable environmental or social impacts are occurring, or are likely to occur; ... initiate management responses which may include, but not be limited to the introduction of ... (see listing Ch. 8 KPOM).

But where are we now?

In the recent 2009 New Year, friends and I undertook a camping trip to northern



Where the horses have been, Cooinbil. Photo Dianne Thompson

KNP, both to dodge the heat of Canberra and to see if the management objectives outlined in Chapter 8 had yet had any effect. We were particularly interested in the initial stages of implementation undertaken at Cooinbil to separate day users, campers without horses and campers with horses, and to look at options for the Long Plain Hut precinct.

At the end of a longish first day, we had journeyed the driveable length of Pocket Saddle Road, the Port Phillip Trail and Long Plain Road before we found the only suitable camping for visitors without horses, at Blue Waterholes and Cooleman Mountain. We visited degraded and heavily populated “camping with horses” sites at Wares Yards, Old Snowy Camp, Ghost Gully, Long Plain Hut and Cooinbil Hut.

Except for patches in the open sun, every “camping with horses” location offered sites that had been severely trampled or polluted by horse dung and urine. This visit demonstrated that every tree, even those where small amounts of shelter might have been on offer, had had horses tethered to them. The ground beneath each tree was a dusty circle (3–5

metres in diameter), dumped with horse dung. There was no doubt in my mind that campers with horses had yet again extended the breadth of their activities in each of these sites. The photo demonstrates the issue. How the Parks Service will change and control these destructive practices and enable sites to be shared by other users remains a very real challenge.

I presume the small area, between the Cooinbil Hut and the creek, near the two toilets, might have been for day visitors and campers without horses. Too bad. Horses had been tethered to the trees, so no shade or protection from the winds for campers there either.

Hopefully by next summer, campers without horses and day visitors to the Tantangara region will have the opportunity to make a choice between several camp sites. Currently the only areas ordinary campers use are at Blue Waterholes and Cooleman Mountain. These camping areas are relatively small, the roadway cuts both in two, and the dust from day visitors’ cars blows across the sites.

Campers at Long Plain complained of the horse campers damage and especially of the smell of urine and dung. But as there were several family groups with young children needing space and safety from through traffic, they had little choice of camping sites elsewhere.

Let us hope actions by the Parks Service, guided by the KPOM, will deliver outcomes that benefit both the environment and non-horse-riding users in the not too distant future.

Dianne Thompson

Pack walk around Quiltys Mountain (cont'd)

Running Creek, before a final climb up to join the firetrail 2 km south of the cars.

References.

- Budawang Committee 1982, *Pigeon House and beyond: a guide to the Budawang Range and environs*, Budawang Committee, Eastwood.
Ron Doughton 1989, *Bushwalking in the Budawangs*, Envirobook, Sydney.

Map: Endrick 1:25 000, 8927-4-S, Second Edition, 1986.

Philip Gatenby



PARKWATCH

Tourism versus nature

The report on tourism in NSW by John O'Neill last April attacked the NPWS for the obstructive culture toward tourism. It recommended that the Premier open up national parks and wilderness areas for tourism development. Under pressure the NPWS produced a tourism policy to overcome impediments to park development and facilitate partnership opportunities with the tourism industry. A new tourism branch has been established within national parks to better utilise these "assets".

A taskforce on Tourism and National Parks was then set up under Brian Gilligan, a former Director-General of the NPWS. The Taskforce's primary role is to advance changes to national park and wilderness laws that would facilitate commercial use and development of our national parks.

The program is to put protected areas and park managers on a more commercial footing and is given an added push by the State deficit. It represents the most serious attack on nature-based park management since the establishment of the NPWS in 1967. The tourism industry is making a political opportunity out of economic woes, but it is now environment groups who must go on the attack. We need to save parks for nature.

Park visitors, including tourists, come to protected areas to renew their sense of wonder. Our bushland national parks are the most democratic public spaces we have and we need to keep them safe. If the tourism industry achieves its hoped-for deregulation, then national parks will be degraded. The spellbinding contact with nature cannot be achieved within an exclusive resort or a glamour camp surrounded by the park it was excised from. These agendas are totally flawed.

We need to stop the Tourism and Transport Forum, who helped ruin our planning laws, from weakening our national park and wilderness laws.

Colong Bulletin No 229 December 2008

Four down and four to go

Following on from last season's successful building works to four Kosciuszko National Park huts, the pace is being sustained to tackle four more this season. Nineteen huts were damaged in the 2003 bushfires — some partially, while others were burnt to the ground, and three were reconstructed soon after the fires. Following changes in heritage

conventions, a new approach to assess each, based not solely on its fabric but also on its social significance, nine were identified to be rebuilt from scratch and another four, partially standing, will be reconstructed.

Interestingly, to conform to modern building codes, building works are being carried out with a few modifications. "Our aim" explains Megan Bowden, whose task it is to pull together all the pieces, "is to capture the significance of the original. These huts look the same, but to meet today's standards we have incorporated steel piers, concrete footings and tie-down rods. We don't want maintenance issues."

Last season saw the rebuild of Broken Dam, Delaney's, Paton's and stage 1 of the Opera House. This season O'Keefe's, Brooks, Sawyers and Boobee huts are on the work sheet. "It's a fantastic thing to do. We had over 100 people at each of the openings, and often they haven't been back to the mountains for a while. It's about re-establishing the social links as well as rebuilding the huts."

Full-time and temporary parks staff drive the building process and are joined by volunteers from the Kosciuszko Huts Association as well as others including family descendants of those who've had connections with these huts over many years.

News from the Alps #37 2008

Australia's outback wilderness

A new report, *Conservation of Australia's Outback Wilderness* has identified 40 per cent of Australia as being "relatively free of human interference". On launching the report, Dr Barry Traill said "to have a continent with this much remaining wilderness intact is unusual and globally significant".

Two large American philanthropy organisations, the Pew Environment Group and the Nature Conservancy, plan to spend \$12 million over three years to help Australian organisations improve the protection of the wilderness outback. The report by Dr Carol Booth and Dr Barry Traill has preserved three selection criteria to be used to determine the finding of proposed conservation initiatives.

- Projects will achieve long-term protection of significant ecological values and processes in large natural areas. This requires conservation tenure that is coupled with a management

regime that mitigates key threats.

- Projects will achieve on-ground results within the three-year program timeframe.
- Projects will be integrated whenever possible with region-wide conservation programs and planning that provide the basis for maintaining ecological processes.

The initiative's main goal is to achieve conservation tenure and associated good management for large natural areas (i.e. 1 million hectares plus) in outback Australia, both on land and sea. The project hopes to support Traditional Owners on Indigenous lands, through mechanisms such as Indigenous protected areas, private land conservation work on other tenures, including acquisitions and covenants, and advocacy to achieve secure state-owned conservation reserves.

Colong Bulletin No 229 December 2008

Last one left standing

Back in 1928, the Commonwealth Forestry Bureau (then known as the Forestry and Timber Bureau) began planting trees in arboreta to discover more about which species were potentially suitable for timber and paper forest plantations in Australia. By 1969, 34 arboreta had been established in the mountains and lowlands of the ACT, and after the 2003 fires took their toll, only one upland arboretum was left standing — the Bendora Arboretum in the Brindabella Ranges of Namadgi National Park.

Most of the 52 different species planted at Bendora are conifers, larches, spruces, firs and white pines. None of the hardwoods grew well but other trees thrived, but by 1974 the ACT arboreta had fulfilled their primary purpose; the Monterey pine *Pinus radiata* had been confirmed as the best species for most sites in cool temperate southern Australia.

Given Bendora's cultural significance, and the fact that it's the last one left standing, it is not surprising that the arboretum has its supporters. Friends of the ACT Arboreta (FACTA) along with the Kosciuszko Huts Association are caretakers of nearby Bendora Hut, built in the 1940s to shelter those working to establish the arboretum. More recently FACTA have also worked with Parks, Conservation and Lands to develop the Bendora Arboretum walking

(continued)

PARKWATCH (continued)

track and install new interpretive signs. Together, the new signs and the track will go a long way to enhance the walks and talks currently offered by rangers and members of FACTA.

News from the Alps #37 2008

Rising seas and biodiversity

In July, the Gippsland Coastal Board released a report *Climate Change, Sea Level Rise and Coastal Subsidence*. It highlights the fact that the Gippsland coast faces the dual threats of climate change and coastal subsidence.

Gippsland also has a highly erodible coastline, making it particularly susceptible to storm surges and sea level rise. These are major threats to natural and cultural assets and infrastructure on both private and public land. Coastal erosion and flooding are likely to result in:

- Increased penetration of estuaries, rivers, bays and inlets by salt water
- Erosion of dune barriers
- Collapse of ecosystems unable to tolerate more saline conditions.

To manage the adverse impacts of climate change the board is calling for a clear federal and state policy that supports further research on the impacts and the development of appropriate planning schemes. The report recommends developing appropriate planning tools to support planning scheme implementation.

The VPNA supports this call. However, if we are going to protect biodiversity we need to go beyond an “asset vs threat” analysis and identify how we can build species’ resilience in the face of climate change impacts. We need to gather as much information as possible about marine and coastal species, their habitats and their likely response to change in temperature, ocean acidity and sea level rise. We also need to identify the impact of their responses on the wider ecosystem. The information must then lead to recommendations on assisting and achieving biodiversity resilience in relation to climate change.

Update VPNA October – November 2008

State of the World’s Birds report released

Common birds are in decline across the world, providing evidence of a rapid deterioration in the global environment that is affecting all life on earth—including human life. All the world’s governments have committed themselves

to slowing or halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010. But reluctance to commit what are often trivial sums in terms of national budgets means that this target is almost certain to be missed. These are some of the stark messages from *State of the Worlds Birds*, a new publication and website (birdlife.org/sowb) launched at the BirdLife International’s World Conference in Buenos Aires.

The report highlights the decline of common birds in the Pacific region. “Studies of resident Australian waders reveal that 81 per cent of their populations disappeared in just quarter of a century,” noted Dr Rands, CEO of BirdLife. TBN Coordinator, Dean Ingwersen, states that “Species such as Black-winged Stilt and Red-necked Avocet have seen marked declines, and without improved management of critical wetlands and environmental water allocations, these declines will continue.”

The story is the same for birds migrating between Australian and Asian regions. The populations of migrant shorebirds wintering in south-eastern Australia have plummeted by 79 per cent over a 24 year period.

State of the Worlds Birds identifies many key global threats, including the intensification of industrial-scale agriculture and fishing, the spread of invasive species, logging and the replacement of natural forest with monocultural plantations. However, Dr Rands warns: “In the long term, human-induced climate change may be the most serious stress of all”.

The encouraging news is that conservation works and is relatively cheap. Direct action saved 16 bird species from extinction between 1994 and 2004. But conserving biodiversity now urgently needs more financial support.

From: www.birdsinbackyards.net

Economic benefits of red gum parks

A new report has reaffirmed that there will be significant economic benefits to regional towns and communities if red gum parks are established in Victoria. The PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) report, *Economic Value of Red River Gum National Parks*, was commissioned by the VNPA and The Wilderness Society and endorsed by Tourism Alliance Victoria. It identifies 23 new jobs and about \$152 million over

10 years in benefits to regional Victoria if improved facilities, including accommodation and visitor services, are developed as part of new River Red Gum parks.

VEAC released its final report on the River Red Gum Forests Investigation in July, recommending the creation of more than 100 000 ha of permanent reserves in public land from Lake Hume to the SA border, including the iconic Barmah forest and wetlands. Early in September the government created a new Community Engagement Panel to study how to implement VEAC’s recommendations.

Update VPNA October – November 2008

Barking owls in trouble

A report into the status of two large forest owls in River Red Gum State Forests has sounded warning bells about the dramatic decline of Barking Owls in the area. The project was funded through the Taronga Foundation Conservation Field Grants and the NPA of NSW. Barking Owls are listed as a vulnerable species under the NSW *Threatened Species Conservation Act*, and, as a high-order predator, are considered an indicator species.

Barking Owls were common in the River Red Gums four decades ago but surveys undertaken this year found just one individual. The project authors attribute this dramatic decline to ongoing drought in the region, but found that the owls’ “current situation is compounded by over a century of habitat loss and fragmentation” and recommended the protection of forest areas where the owls are found.

The surveys also resulted in the first formal record of the Powerful Owl in south-west NSW, in Cottadidda State Forest, which has highlighted the need for far greater survey effort in Red Gums. The Powerful Owl and its prey species are dependent on hollow-bearing trees for habitat, which are being lost to ongoing forestry operations despite the continuing campaigns to create large new national parks in the Red Gums.

*National Parks Journal NSW Vol 52 no 6
December 08 – January 09*

Selected by Hazel Rath

NPA notices

National Parks Association Calendar				
	Mar 09	Apr 09	May 09	Jun 09
Public holidays	Mon 9	Fri 10-Mon 13 Mon 27	–	Mon 8
General meetings	Thur 19	Thur 16	Thur 21	Thur 18
Committee meetings	Tues 3	Tues 7	Tues 5	Tues 2
Gudgeny Bush Regeneration ²	Sat 14	Sat 4 ¹	Sat 9	Sat 13
Further details: 1 GBRG April work party one week earlier than usual because of Easter 2 Yankee Hat car park 10:00am contact Clive Hurlstone 6288 7592(h) 0407 783 422(mob)				

General Meetings
Third Thursday of the month
(not December or January)

8:00pm


Uniting Church hall
56 Scrivener Street
O'Connor

50th Anniversary Photo Exhibition
The NPA turns 50 in 2010 and the occasion will be marked by a number of events, including an exhibition of members' photographs. Keep an eye on the website and *Burning Issues* for conditions of entry, and dust off those shutters.

New members of the association
The NPA ACT welcomes the following new members:

Barry and Lesley McCann,
and we welcome back Shirley Lewis


We look forward to seeing these members at NPA activities.



**Trout Stream and Fly Rod
Fly Fishing around Canberra
and the Monaro**

By Graeme Wicks, with illustrations by Patricia Wicks
Published by Ginninderra Press

A memoir of a first season of fly fishing and the way things were in the bush in 1966–67




Graeme Wicks is ... an author with a very perceptive eye for detail and a highly developed style. One recognises the stream and the surrounding bushland he describes. ... Many miles are covered in trampling through the bush and the tussocks, with the usual encounters with birds (feathered and the rarer type), marsupials and reptiles, everything recorded in fine detail, with a good deal of humour ... Leon Veugen, Rod and Line.


Obtain from Graeme Wicks, PO Box 524, Mawson, ACT, 2607, or phone 6286 4729, or email gwicks@iimetro.com.au. Price \$22.00, including postage.

Surplus library books

The Alps in Flower by I R McCann, 1987
Alps invaders — Weeds of the Australian High Country (pocket guide)
Bushwalks in the Sydney Region Vol 1 (edited by Stephen Lord & George Daniel).

If you are interested in any of these books contact Sonja on 6251 1291.



 The NPA ACT website is hosted by our generous sponsor, Encode.

Who on Earth Cares

Who on Earth Cares is a campaign from the Australian Conservation Foundation bringing together Australians from all walks of life who share a concern about climate change.

If you care about climate change, put yourself on the map today at www.whoonearthcares.com

Front cover photographs

Main photo. *Alpine sunray*, *Leucochrysum albicans*.
Photo Philip Gatenby

Insets(top to bottom). *Ashworth fire trail, Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve* (page 8). *Photo Max Lawrence*

Eagle fledgling on nest, lower Molonglo (page 4).
Photo Adrienne Nicholson

Horse impact on vegetation, Cooinbil (page 11).
Photo Dianne Thompson

Back cover photograph

Top photo. *NPA wednesday walkers on Mount Gingera, 28 January 2009.*
Photo Meg McKone

General Meetings

Thursday 19 March

Sex and murder in small wasps.

Dr John La Salle, Head of the Australian National Insect Collection, CSIRO Entomology.

Small wasps are among the most common of all organisms, and exist in all terrestrial ecosystems. However, most people are unaware of their existence, let alone their beneficial impact in the environment. This talk introduces the parasitic wasps, their fascinating biology, and their critical role in maintaining environmental balance in both natural and man-made ecosystems.

Thursday 16 April

Extinction is forever. Australia's top predator is sinking fast.

Barry Oakman, President, Australian Dingo Conservation Association.

Barry will talk on the origins of the dingo; legal aspects of dingo management; myths surrounding the dingo; conservation efforts and the future of the dingo.

Thursday 21 May

A tree-ring perspective of climate and river flow in Namadgi National Park and beyond.

Dr Matthew Brookhouse, Research Fellow, Dendrochronology, alpine ecology and climatology, The Fenner School of Environment and Society, ANU.

Matthew will introduce the principles of dendroclimatology and describe his current research which is focused on studying past climate and river flow in the Cotter and Murrumbidgee catchments.

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.

Office-bearers

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The NPA ACT office is in the Conservation Council building, Childers Street, City. It is staffed by volunteers but not on a regular basis. Callers may leave phone or email messages at any time and they will be attended to. The post office mail box is cleared daily.

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Subscription rates (1 July to 30 June)

Household membership	\$44	Single members	\$38.50
Corporate membership	\$33	<i>Bulletin</i> only	\$33
Concession	\$11		

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 the postal address above.

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For further information on NPA publications, and to keep up with our activities generally, please visit our website <http://www.npaact.org.au>

