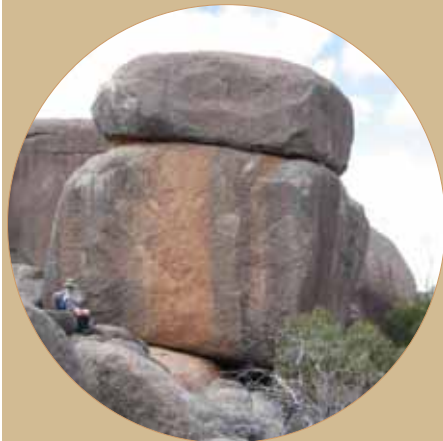




NPA *Bulletin*

Volume 46 Number 3 September 2009

National Parks Association of the Australian Capital Territory Inc



**25th anniversary
of Namadgi**



**Winter
outings**



**Glenburn
update**

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

CONTENTS

From the President	2
<i>Christine Goonrey</i>	
Annual General Meeting 2009	3
<i>Sonja Lenz</i>	
Max Lawrence rejoins the Committee	3
<i>Col McAlister</i>	
In-principle acceptance environment report	3
<i>Graeme Wicks</i>	
Annual Report	4
<i>Christine Goonrey</i>	
Financial overview <i>Rod Griffiths</i>	5
25 th anniversary of Namadgi	5
Alastair Morrison 1915–2009	6
<i>Annette Smith et al</i>	
Our 50 th anniversary dates and events	7
<i>Judy Kelly</i>	
Problems with control burning	8
<i>Ted Edwards</i>	
Biodiversity under fire	9
<i>Lyndall Hatch</i>	
NPA art at Gudgenby Cottage	10
<i>Adrienne Nicholson</i>	
Three scenes at the cottage	11
<i>Fiona MacDonald Brand</i>	
Art on display	12

Gudgenby Bushies plant nearly 600 trees	12
<i>Michael Goonrey</i>	
Kalamurina—outback reserve worth protecting	13
<i>Fiona MacDonald Brand</i>	
Scientific kangaroo management	14
<i>Kevin McCue</i>	
Junior Rangers on the run!	14
<i>Rod Griffiths</i>	
Tree-rings and river flows in Namadgi	15
<i>Max Lawrence</i>	
Glenburn/Burbong historic sites—an update	16
<i>Col McAlister</i>	
Winter outings	17
<i>Mike Bremers</i>	
Reserve now predator-proofed	17
<i>Graeme Wicks</i>	
Book reviews	18/19
Breaking news	19
PARKWATCH	20/21
<i>Selected by Hazel Rath and Graeme Wicks</i>	
NPA notices	22
Meetings and speaker information	23
NPA information and contacts	23

From the President

Thinking back over the problems facing national parks over the past few years I was reminded of the title of a book which caught my eye a while ago: *We've had a Hundred Years of Psychotherapy and Things are Getting Worse*. As I remember it, the author had two theses: firstly that we were doing psychotherapy the wrong way, and secondly that the more we learn about ourselves, the worse we behave.

It strikes me that we could say the same thing about national parks. Are we managing national parks the wrong way or are we just behaving badly? Twenty-five years after Namadgi was declared a national park we still have people wanting to hold sporting events for hundreds of people in the park; wanting to ride horses, shoot pigs, mud-wallow in four-wheel drives and skid mountain bikes down walking tracks.

Over the last four ACT Budgets nothing has been done to address funding shortfalls for park management. Important conservation work, track building, weed and pest control are neglected because of a lack of resources. Educational programs are very thin on the ground and there is no promotion of the park as a wonderful place for low impact recreation. Our government seems to have forgotten about it.

Nationally we have governments of all persuasions pushing for more tourism infrastructure in national parks: a \$30 million system of helipads and luxury lodges has just been approved along the Three Capes walk in Tasmania. A proposal for construction of luxury accommodation at the heritage lighthouse site at Green Cape in NSW has been funded by a federal grant. And now our Prime Minister says that he wants tourists to continue to walk to the top of Uluru, despite traditional owners' requests not to do so. The thrill seekers and big spenders seem to be setting the agenda, not



the scientists and trained conservationists.

So, are we out of step thinking these things are wrong, or is our society just behaving badly? Last month an interview with the guru of alpine research Dr Alec Costin was circulated which gave the debate some perspective for me. It is well worth reading the whole interview at

<http://www.science.org.au/scientists/ac.htm>.

With the wisdom of long, hard years of experience and research, Alec says: "It is so incredibly important to retain, wherever we can, examples of largely unspoiled nature, because they are the only permanent reference points we have of what can be done. That old tree in the paddock (over there) is a big tree at 30 metres, 100 feet. The tallest trees in the world now are only 300 feet. In von Mueller's time, in the mid 1800s, Gippsland trees were 550 feet. Unless we have big enough reserves to preserve those examples, we lose sight of what's possible. When mankind does get on the right track—if it ever does—these possible achievements are no longer possible because they are beyond the personal experience of anyone."

So no, I don't think we are wrong to want to set aside places whose only purpose is to grow big trees and protect native plants and wildlife. And we do need to stop behaving badly and stop thinking that what we want to do today in a national park is more important than the long-term preservation of Alec Costin's "possible".

Christine Goonrey

Annual General Meeting 2009

President Christine Goonrey welcomed members to the AGM on Thursday, 20 August 2009, and started off her report with the comment that the year 2008–09 has again been a very busy one. She mentioned five significant submissions and the work on the draft Strategic Bushfire Management Plan as well as NPA ACT's cooperation with the National Parks Australia Council (NPAC) and the Conservation Council of the ACT and the Canberra Region (ConsACT).

Christine thanked all members who had contributed to NPA's activities over the year: the Editor and his team, the Outings Convener and his band of walks leaders, the office workers, the Webmaster, the Publications Subcommittee, the Treasurer, and—in this year especially—the working group for the 50th anniversary of the NPA ACT.

The full President's report is published elsewhere in this *Bulletin*.

In his report for the year ended 30 June 2009, read out by the President, the absent Treasurer Rod Griffiths highlighted that NPA's profit was again up on the previous year's. A complete copy of the audited financial report was available for perusal at the meeting. A financial summary by the Treasurer is included in this *Bulletin* (page 5).

Both reports were accepted by the meeting and Mr Malcolm Prentice, FCPA, was thanked and reappointed as auditor for the coming year. The meeting extended their gratitude to both the President and the Treasurer for their reports by acclamation.

Christine then mentioned the passing of long-time Life Member Alastair Morrison (see page 6 for the obituary).

David Large took over the chair to conduct the annual election of office bearers and Committee members. Nominees for 11 positions were duly elected (see inside back page of the *NPA*

Bulletin), but David noted that as there are still vacant positions on the Committee additional members could be co-opted during the year. All previous office bearers and Committee members retained their positions, and Max Lawrence rejoined the Committee.

Re-elected President Christine and the meeting thanked David for acting as the returning officer by acclamation.

After the official part of the meeting, longstanding member Di Thompson gave an inspiring presentation on *New England National Parks and the Upper Murray Catchment*—based on various camping and walking trips she has recently led—with some magnificent photos.

After the presentation Christine invited all to enjoy the wonderful supper provided by members, and Adrienne Nicholson's aromatic gluhwein.

Sonja Lenz

Max Lawrence rejoins the Committee

Congratulations Max on your election to the committee of NPA ACT!

Max has been a very active member of the NPA for the last 16 years.

Very soon after joining the association he began leading outings and he is still doing so. He is an excellent leader who ensures that all participants get the most out of every activity. He is a keen photographer and is most generous with his photos, often producing CDs of them for walk participants. Many of his photos have appeared in the *Bulletin*, in my monograph on the historic sites at Glenburn/Burbong, and in several of Graeme Barrow's walking books.

Max has served on previous committees and has also been Outings Convener on several occasions. At

present, he is the Editor of the *Bulletin*. He also acts with great skill and flair as auctioneer at our Christmas parties.

Max spent his entire working career, with the exception of a short stint in Aboriginal Affairs, as a research economist with the Bureau of Agricultural Economics and its successor the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics.

In his retirement he and his wife Marie have crisscrossed Australia in their caravan. They are both lovers of the Australian bush, particularly in its remotest areas.

On a personal note, I met Max 50 years ago when we came from country NSW to go to University. We have remained friends and for the past

25 years have done much walking together.

Col McAlister



In-principle acceptance of environment report

The Government accepted in principle all the recommendations contained in the 2007/08 *ACT State of the Environment Report*. This was stated by the Minister for the Environment, Climate Change and Water, Simon Corbell, on June 17 when he tabled the Government's response in the House of Assembly.

The report was prepared by the ACT Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment, Dr Maxine Cooper, and examined a range of complex issues, including air quality, biodiversity, climate and greenhouse gas emissions, catchment quality, community wellbeing

and use of resources.

"In relation to climate and greenhouse gases, the Government recently announced a target of zero net greenhouse gas emissions for Canberra and that legislated interim targets will be determined taking into account the Assembly's inquiry into greenhouse gas reduction targets," Mr Corbell said.

"The introduction of the Feed-in Tariff to encourage renewable energy generation has also been a positive step forward in progressing the Government's climate change agenda."

The Government was aware of the

need to ensure issues around the environment and sustainability were addressed across the business of the Government, with the recently-established Department of the Environment, Climate Change, Energy and Water responsible for ensuring this integration.

Mr Corbell said the establishment of the new department and the allocation of \$35 million for the environment in the last ACT budget were testimony to the Government's commitment to achieving a more sustainable future.

Graeme Wicks

President's annual report

The past 12 months have seen great activity as we prepare for our 50th anniversary and work to meet the increasing challenges facing our natural environment. NPA ACT made five significant submissions both in the ACT and nationally: on the Role of the Commissioner of Sustainability in the ACT; the Royal Commission into the Victorian Fires; the ACT Kangaroo Management Strategy; the Tidbinbilla Management Plan Discussion Paper; and Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy. Members attended a total of eleven meetings to discuss the ACT's Strategic Bushfire Management Plan and made extensive comments on the proposals for prescribed burning in Namadgi and urban nature reserves over the next ten years.

We wrote to the Chief Minister about funding to fight the invasion of European wasps before these pests became entrenched. We also wrote to him twice about the ACT Budget; on the need to restore the Glenburn precinct; and finally seeking a meeting to discuss our concerns about funding for national parks and reserves. This meeting will now take place on September 3 so will be reported on in a future *Bulletin*.

Our members have been active in the wider conservation movement, providing strong representation on the Conservation Council's Board and Management Committee as well as on the Biodiversity Committee. Members have also been active on the National Parks Australia Council which represents Australia's national parks associations.

Preparations for NPA ACT's 50th anniversary in 2010 have been a key component of the Committee's workload this year. Thanks to the hard work of so many people ably led by Judy Kelly, events are being planned right through the year. Venues have been booked, guest speakers and caterers are being arranged, Sabine Friedrich has designed an anniversary logo, there will be special walks and outings and we are even planning to produce our own wine label.

A big thank you to Mike Bremers who has organised the scanning of all 46 years of the *NPA Bulletin* so that they can be available on our website for our anniversary. Putting up the early *Bulletins* in particular has made us feel so much closer to those who started NPA off with such high hopes. Mike and his merry band of helpers have given us a very special gift for our anniversary.

Kevin McCue is already deeply

involved in planning next year's symposium: *National Parks—can they take the heat?* It looks like being another great success so book the dates into your diaries now: May 7 and 8. The venue, the quality of speakers and the good company will make this another memorable event.

Mike Smith has continued his efficient management of our outings program and has added two Personal Locator Beacons to our safety equipment to ensure our walks leaders are equipped for an emergency. A few innovations have been introduced this past year, including a hardy band of serious walkers tackling major day walks such as from Bendora Dam to Fishing Gap.

Adrienne Nicholson has introduced more gentle rambles as part of the walks program as well as doing her usual outstanding job providing refreshments at NPA events including the Christmas party and general meetings. She also organised an *Art Week at Gudenby Cottage*, which was so successful we are looking at having more such events in the future.

Martin Chalk and his team of work party leaders have run more than 10 work parties over the past year in places as diverse as the Bendora Arboretum and Blundell's Flat. Members have removed pine wildings from native forest; rabbit-proofed Frank and Jack's hut; and cut back willows and briars around Gudenby Cottage. It is work which is valued by the park managers because it is often the fiddly, people-intensive tasks which they don't have the time or resources to do.

General meetings have continued to enjoy the fruits of Clive Hurlstone's flair and prescience. We heard from the manager of Batemans Marine Park just after the marine park was finally declared; from a kangaroo expert just as the kangaroo management plan became such a hot issue; and from a tree ring expert who is examining the river flows in the Murrumbidgee catchment just as the climate debate heats up.

The Publications Sub-committee under Sabine Friedrich powered through a huge workload. The consistency and high standard of our publications is something we are very proud of and it is due to the work put in by this team. The calendar was a big success, so we are planning to have another go for next year.

A field guide of ACT insects is probably the most exciting project for

some time but we are equally looking forward to a revised edition of the reptile and frog book. We have an ACT Environment grant to produce a "coffee table" sized book on Namadgi National Park which is starting to come together, and our pod casting experiment will be ready by October.

The colourful *Bulletins* produced by Max Lawrence and his able team have been outstanding over the past year. Max has made sure we covered the big topics of the conservation movement as well as our own walks and interests so that each issue has been a thoroughly good read. Members' contributions have played a significant part in this success so keep those articles coming in.

Judy Kelly and Chris Emery have kept us up to date between *Bulletins* with the email newsletter *Burning Issues* which is a big task because so many of us keep changing our email address. Please make sure you let the NPA office know if you change your contact details, particularly email.

Chris and Sabine have also been masters of our website which is now being archived by the National Library of Australia, a real compliment to its content and design. Kevin McCue and Martin Chalk are responsible for the photo gallery which is such an inspiration to us all. Martin and his team are also arranging a territory wide tour of members' photographs to be exhibited in ACT libraries, Macarthur House and the National Botanic Gardens, hopefully with the aid of a successful application for an ACT Heritage Grant.

Managing the office has been a key part of our success and our very grateful thanks go to our office volunteers, Diana, Julie and Lorraine, ably led by Annette Smith, who have done an excellent job of logging correspondence, keeping records and managing the membership registration process. Diana has given us great service for several years, including entering NPA's books into the library database and has decided she needs a break. We wish her well. Sonja Lenz is a real tower of strength as Secretary, always solving problems, ensuring the right things are done and done well and managing the business of our organisation.

The special hero of NPA ACT, the quiet and steady hand on our financial books, is Rod Griffiths. Bills are paid, membership fees banked, records kept and financial rules obeyed with Rod's

(continued next page)

Annual report *(continued)*

trademark lack of fuss. We know he struggles mightily with MYOB and the dark arts involved in balancing the books but he also keeps a steady check on our more enthusiastic proposals. Our financial health is the solid foundation of all that we do and we couldn't do it without Rod's careful guidance and hard

work. Special thanks are also due to members for donations which are steadily on the increase. We hope to see even more members take advantage of our donations program and special membership rates next year.

As I said last year, nothing is too hard to achieve with such good people

working together. As we enter our 50th anniversary year, NPA ACT continues to live up to the hopes and ideals of our founding members, which, after reading those early *Bulletins*, is saying a lot.

Christine Goonrey

Another good year—financial overview

With so much financial doom and gloom in the news over the past year, it's great to be able to say that the association's finances continue to be strong.

It's the third week of July and I have just given the NPA ACT's draft financial statements to our auditor and the figures are looking good!

A surplus for the year of \$12 207 has continued to consolidate the financial base from which the NPA ACT funds its activities. (Apologies if I fall into accounting-speak, but I am an accountant!). The revenue for the year was \$38 944 which was very much a result of:

- the generous support given to the association by its members; donations were \$8081 and subscriptions \$6973; and

- strong book sales of over \$20 000. These sales are a clear testament to the quality of our publications. We're even getting international orders for our orchid book!

Offsetting the revenue were \$26 737 of expenses, half of which was the cost of our books (\$13 038). We also had a full year of colour cover-sheeted *Bulletins* which utilised \$4818 but are really works of art. Then there are our general costs including insurance \$1300 and meeting room hire \$600.

A nice thing that happened this year was Martin Chalk's success in securing a \$900 volunteers grant. This has allowed the NPA ACT to reimburse some of our volunteers for the cost of using their cars to get to our work parties. Well done, Martin.

The strong result has helped maintain our sound cash position with over \$95 000 in our accounts. This year-end balance has been helped by the receipt of a \$15 000 grant to assist with the publication of our proposed Namadgi book. We also have \$39 000 of books in our inventory which facilitate future book sales. Overall our final net asset position was \$111 614.

Now naturally these figures could change with audit adjustments but they will still be in the ballpark.

2010 will be a busy year for the NPA ACT and I am pleased that it is in a position to manage its 50th anniversary activities from a strong financial base.

Rod Griffiths

25th anniversary of Namadgi

Namadgi was declared a National Park on World Environment Day in June 1984 and gazetted on 3 October that year.

Park rangers held an open day at Orroral Homestead on 8 June 2009 to commemorate the declaration of Namadgi National Park. It was cold, misty and rainy, but a rainbow arched over the homestead for most of the morning and a steady stream of visitors appeared out of the mist. Hot chocolate, coffee, tea and biscuits were provided to warmly welcome those who braved the conditions. Matthew Higgins, with his usual wealth of knowledge on the history of the area, was there with a team from ABC local television (preparing for the launch of his recent book), and he and rangers were happy to chat with visitors about the homestead, the valley and the park.

Adrienne Nicholson



Photo Adrienne Nicholson

NPA ACT members will celebrate the 25th anniversary of the gazettal of

Namadgi National Park

on

Sunday 11th October 2009

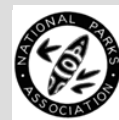
with a celebratory picnic lunch at the iconic Yerrabi Track, and with an *optional* walk up to the Boboyan Trig.

Bring your own lunch—nibbles and some drinks will be provided.

Meet at the Namadgi Visitor Centre at 10:15am to arrange car pooling, or at 11:00am at the car park at the start of the Yerrabi Track.

All members, old and new, are invited—join in and celebrate this important anniversary with friends and family!

Please contact a member of the committee (see the inside back cover for contact details) if you need a lift.





Alastair Morrison 1915 – 2009

Members of the National Parks Association of the ACT have been saddened to learn of the death of Alastair Morrison on 4 August. Alastair was made a Life Member of NPA in March 1995 in recognition of the huge support he gave to furthering the aims and objectives of the association.

Alastair was born in Peking in 1915 and studied at Cambridge before becoming a freelance journalist. In the following years he visited South America several times and was able there to indulge in his lifetime interest in birds. He went to China in 1940 where he worked as a cipher officer before being evacuated in 1942.

He worked with the British Intelligence Organisation in Calcutta before joining the Indian Army, and then returned to China in 1944 and 1945 with Force 136 working with the resistance movements in occupied areas of Asia.

In 1946 Alastair married Hedda, an adventurous and highly regarded photographer who shared his love for nature. After he was demobilised, he and Hedda spent nearly two decades in Sarawak. Here Alastair firstly promoted the idea of Sarawak becoming a state of Malaysia, then spent four years helping with the transition.

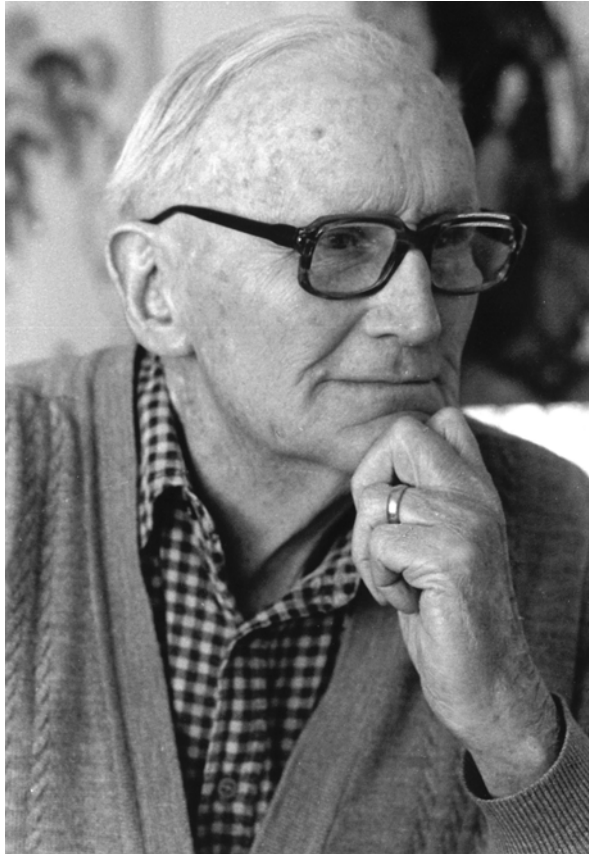
In 1967 the Morrisons chose to settle in Canberra, the Bush Capital, and in 1969 they joined the NPA. Alastair and Hedda went on many NPA outings in the years that followed and as Hedda's health deteriorated they continued to explore more accessible parts of what was to become Namadgi National Park on their own. They had a special love for the Brindabellas, and often welcomed in the New Year on Mt Gingera.

On one fateful trip they decided to check out Boboyan Trig which they had spotted from Boboyan Road. They were so impressed by the panoramic view they discovered that they took Reg Alder there, and from that was born the idea of developing a track to the trig.

When government officials refused Alastair's approaches to build the track, Reg undertook to do it with the help of NPA members, much to Alastair's delight. Yerrabi Track as it became known is one the most popular and rewarding walks in Namadgi.

Writer of merit

Alastair was a writer of considerable merit. His concern for conservation and his promotion of interest in the Bush Capital's natural values were evident in his letters to local papers and his articles in the NPA *Bulletin*.



His articles covered a wide spectrum of topics and concerns: book reviews; outings or trip descriptions; issues of environmental concern such as destruction of forests by wood-chipping, the need for protection of the Murrumbidgee corridor against future development, and potential impacts of the National Capital Development Commission plans for new roads in Namadgi National Park that could open the way for inappropriate recreational facilities.

Alastair also wrote some reflective articles expressing his joy at living so close to the bush he and Hedda loved, and his worries about protecting it.

One of his most significant articles was in 1986 following the association's 25th anniversary, "*After the Jubilee*". In this article he issued a reminder that NPA members needed to examine and consider how they would address not just existing challenges, but a whole new set

of pressures that would emerge over the next 25 years. He gently warned that these challenges would require committed and informed individuals to unite under the NPA banner to protect the values at the heart of the association.

With those 25 years now drawing to a close, it is a timely document to refer to in assessing how the association has fared, and how it might fare in the next 25 years.

Sponsored books

Alastair shared his delight of birds in writing up talks on birds, book reviews on birds and bird notes including for the Yerrabi Track. But his most significant and enduring contribution was to recognise and meet the need for a field guide to birds of the ACT. In his oral history interview with Matthew Higgins that was commissioned by the NPA in 1999, Alastair confessed that his secret ambition had been to write a book on the birds of the ACT himself.

Not confident that he had sufficient knowledge to achieve this dream, Alastair commissioned McComas Taylor to write and organise the book, and Nicholas Day to illustrate it. He then provided the NPA with a substantial donation to publish *The Field Guide to the Birds of the ACT* in 1993.

The harmony in which this enterprise had been conducted led to Alastair making another large donation to the NPA in 1997 to publish and print *Reptiles and Frogs of the Australian Capital Territory*, written by Ross Bennett.

The publication of these books provides a significant continuing income to the NPA, and has given the association the confidence to reprint them and publish field guides on other subjects. Alastair's special legacy to the NPA was his wise counsel and public support for the aims and objectives of the association. His generous financial donations have enabled the NPA to continue to produce publications to help meet its objective of educating people in the ACT's natural history.

Alastair was a personal friend to many, and he enriched many more lives. Vale Alastair.

**Annette Smith, Adrienne Nicholson
and Clive Hurlstone**

(Photo by Reg Alder)

Our 50th anniversary dates and events

Monday 1 March 2010, 6:00–8:30pm
Celebration of NPA ACT's
Inaugural Meeting
National Film and Sound Archives

Foundation and life member, Fiona MacDonald Brand will be a guest speaker. Professor Rick Shine, Professor of Evolutionary Biology at Sydney University, will be keynote speaker; he won a prize for his essay about the red-bellied black snake in 1967 in an early NPA ACT students' competition. A limited edition of a booklet devoted to Nancy Burbidge's early *Bulletin* article series, *Eyes or No Eyes*, will be launched. Refreshments to be provided. Numbers will be limited because of space restrictions.

Sunday 7 March 2010, from 11:00am
50th Anniversary Picnic
Namadgi Visitor Centre

All members are welcome to enjoy barbequed sausages which NPA ACT will provide. We ask people to bring a salad and our inhouse baker will make a sumptuous cake. Namadgi staff will be invited, as well as representatives from other ACT conservation organisations. A special 50th anniversary NPA ACT *Bulletin** will be launched at the picnic.

Friday 7 May 2010, 12:30 for 1:00–5:00pm
Saturday 8 May 2010, 8:30am for 9:00–5:00pm
NPA ACT Symposium
CSIRO Discovery Centre

"National Parks – can they take the heat?"
(see below)

NPA ACT symposium 2010: *National Parks—can they take the heat?*

Our 50th anniversary symposium will again be held at the CSIRO Discovery Centre, Acton. Talks will focus on the future of national parks in a changing world, and the problems posed by changing climate and urbanisation, including: bushfires, tourism and impacts on biodiversity.

Saturday 19 June 2010 from 11:00am
Winter Solstice Lunch
Gudgenby Cottage

We'll have soup, bread, and gluhwein. All members welcome.

Saturday 30 October 2010, 6:30–11:00pm
Pot Luck Dinner
Wesley Centre

Note the date is **not** 7 October as incorrectly stated in the June *Bulletin*. Participants will be asked to bring a dish to share.

NPA 50th anniversary photography exhibition

Photos will be on display at NPA ACT's 50th anniversary events, at the Australian National Botanic Gardens, MacArthur House and in several of Canberra's public libraries throughout the year. **The closing date for entries is Monday 31 October 2009.** Conditions were printed in the June *Bulletin*.

NPA calendar 2010

The Publications Sub-committee has put together a calendar with historical photos of NPA events over the years. It will be available in October. Please fill in the order form on the back of your address label and send it to the NPA office as soon as possible so we can get the required number of calendars printed.

Other publications

As well as the two publications mentioned above, we are planning:

- *The Namadgi "big book"* (yet to be named) will be launched sometime

next year. It will feature text, high quality photographs plus a CD with material from a podcast. Christine Goonrey, Amanda Caldwell and team are running the project.

- *Guide to Insects of the South-East Tablelands* by Roger Farrow, in conjunction with the Publications Sub-committee.
- *Reptiles and Frogs of the Australian Capital Territory* by Ross Bennett. A new edition of this field guide will be launched.

Launch dates for each of these publications will be announced closer to finalisation.

* A good range of contributions for the 50th anniversary *Bulletin* has been received. The deadline of June 2009 has passed but would-be contributors are asked to have their articles and illustrations, if available, in as soon as possible (by the end of September at the very latest) to avoid a last minute rush and panic coinciding with the December-January holiday period.

Please email (to save time) to
judy.kelly@tpg.com.au

or post to

50th anniversary *Bulletin*, NPA ACT
GPO Box 544, Canberra, ACT 2601.

Judy Kelly



NPA ACT aims to promote a wider public understanding of issues affecting park management decisions and to ensure those decisions are "evidence-based". Our long-term goal is to raise the awareness of the role of nature in our lives and to stimulate the public interest in our environment. We have also invited

speakers from other national parks associations to talk about their experiences and hopes for the future.

Costs will again be kept low to encourage your participation.

Check out future *Bulletins* and our website (www.npaact.org.au) for updates and program.

Kevin McCue

Bulletins: scanning of back issues—progress report

The project to electronically scan the old copies of the NPA *Bulletin* so that they are available in keyword-searchable PDF format is progressing well. In April Volumes 1–44 were sent to Scan2Archive in Sydney to be scanned. This was completed by the end of June.

In the last *Bulletin* I called for

volunteers to help identify errors in the optical character recognition (OCR) process. Ten volunteers are now in the process of checking the scanned *Bulletins*. Once corrections have been made the *Bulletins* will be progressively put on the website (www.npaact.org.au) over the next couple of months.

Special thanks to the volunteers: Brian Slee, John Evans, Adrienne Nicholson, Ed Highley, Kevin McCue, Sonja Lenz, Rod Griffiths, Christine Goonrey, Jan Gatenby, Barbara de Bruine.

Mike Bremers

Problems with control burning

This view on the effects of fire is condensed from a more detailed article prepared two years ago.

Control burning is carried out principally to reduce the dry fuel on the forest floor. Most Australian forests have a dry forest floor, if there is moisture present it is either only in the deep litter layer, already part broken down, which is in immediate contact with the soil or due to the temporary diurnal pattern of moistening from dew.

In sclerophyll forests and woodlands dry litter is broken down by macro-invertebrates. Some macro-invertebrates, and all micro-invertebrates, fungi and bacteria only become important in moist litter. Almost all studies of litter breakdown have concentrated on the fauna of moist litter and have little relevance to the normal Australian situation. This is partly because many studies have employed a European-developed technique in which dry litter is discarded together with large and almost complete leaves, and only mostly broken down leaves are retained.

This technique is no use in Australia, except in rainforest, where the largely unsampled macro-invertebrate fauna feeds on the whole or largely intact dry leaves in the surface layers of leaf litter. It consists (at least) of nymphs of grasshoppers (a few) and larvae of beetles (a few) and moths (many), and is almost completely unstudied.

Fire kills all

What is relevant to the control burning method of managing forests and woodlands is that the macro-invertebrates, micro-invertebrates and the rest that are essential in leaf litter breakdown in Australian forests are entirely vulnerable to fire. Fire kills them all.

The normal way that these invertebrates deal with fire is to repopulate from unburnt refuges following the fire. This is the basis of the recommendation that if control burning is essential (for political reasons) then a micro-mosaic burn is preferable over the large-scale very hit-and-miss practices currently used.

As an example of what is meant by hit-and-miss, the airdrop of incendiaries may be claimed to produce a burn of 30 per cent of the forest floor. But usually the fire either fizzles or escapes, and the figure aimed at is not even remotely met. Further, does 30 per cent mean 90 per cent of northern slopes and

10 per cent of southern slopes or 100 per cent of hill tops and 0 per cent of creek banks, or some other unknown combination?

Control without fire

Biological agents are able to control litter without fire [italics added, Ed.]. There are numerous sites which may be cited, without fire for 50 years, which have no excessive litter build up. Unfortunately some studies of litter build up after fire have had no adequate controls where a genuinely unburnt treatment was part of the experiment. Most have had an "unburnt" treatment which has had less than a decade to recover and no cognizance was taken of the possible proximity of refugia.

There have been no adequate studies on the effect of control burning on biodiversity. Such studies as have been done selected one or two groups to study and ignored the vast remainder of species affected. Often these groups were chosen inadvisedly: for example, ants were chosen because they were ubiquitous, common and comparatively easily identified. But ants are only one family, have a fairly standard biology, nest in protected places and are largely carnivorous or nectar feeders and can switch between numerous food sources.

Biodiversity studies are notoriously difficult. As a retired Lepidoptera taxonomist (and there is only one full time working Lepidoptera taxonomist in Australia), I know that no even vaguely complete inventory of moths for any site has ever been attempted in Australia and Australia's Oecophoridae moths are probably a major contributor to dry leaf litter breakdown. Attenborough says with some justification (*Life in the Undergrowth*) that if a virus wiped out all vertebrates the natural plant communities as we know them would hardly change but if the invertebrates were wiped out the world would change dramatically. Yet vertebrates are studied to exhaustion and invertebrates ignored.

Recycling nutrients

Biological breakdown of the litter results in recycling of the nutrients with little loss of nutrients to the forest. Burning results in vast nutrient loss to the forest. Loss of nutrients due to control burning is of major concern.

Repeated control burning will result in artificial selection within and between plant communities such as to favour rapidly growing, short-lived plants. In

other words the forest would change towards a weedscape or grassland. It means that control burning, just from this effect, will become less effective year by year as plants which rapidly regrow and die are selected for.

Control burning is carried out at a season when wildfires are unlikely. In other words, it is done at a season when the flora is most definitely not adapted to fire.

There is a lot of very dubious information about Aboriginal burning and plant adaptation to fire. Aborigines had everything to lose and nothing to gain by extensive burning. Their gain was in accessibility to country and in concentrating game.

There is also a major inconsistency in the stories of flora adapted to fire. Up to a point it is true that eucalypts and many other plants survive fire well. But the plants' adaptations have happened on a timescale quite different to the Aboriginal timescale. The genera *Hakea* and *Banksia* are millions of years old while Aboriginal burning regimes have been imposed only within the last 50 000 years. *Hakea* and *Banksia* are said to be adapted to fire because they drop seeds after fire. But they also drop seeds when they die. Fire may stimulate germination but how many would germinate anyhow given enough time?

Some people say many rare plants pop up after fires. This may be true and it does mean the plants (herbs, forbs) can take advantage of an opening up of a plant community by fire but it may be taking the observation too far to imply that these plants would disappear without fires.

These plants may exist at a low density in a natural unfired community. In certain situations the opening up of plant communities is performed by invertebrates. An instance is the mixed grasslands and herb fields of alpine areas in Kosciuszko National Park where the larval feeding of the hepialid moth *Oncopera alpina* opens the grasslands to become herb fields which will gradually revert to grasslands and so a cycle without fire involvement is established.

Ted Edwards

The article above, and that on the facing page, are valuable contributions to our ongoing debate about "bushfire management," which should be more appropriately called "bushfire risk management". Ed.

Biodiversity under fire

A personal report on the conference organised by the Nature Conservation Council of New South Wales in Sydney, 22–23 June 2009.

My interest in attending this conference was stimulated by the realisation that among my colleagues, whose opinions I respect, opposing views seem to be held on the issue of fire in the environment. I needed to learn more and saw this conference with its list of speakers and topics as an excellent educational opportunity, as indeed it was.

The conference, held over two full days, had 25 speakers and 170 registrants. The speakers included academics from universities and the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre, national parks policy makers, State departments of environment, water authorities, forestry, CSIRO, local councils, rural fire service and environmental non-government organisations like NPA, The Wilderness Society and the Nature Conservation Council.

The whole tone of the conference was influenced by the Victorian fire events of February 2009, and the predicted effects of climate change on both biodiversity and fire behaviour. It was accepted by all speakers that fire has been a defining factor in the evolution of today's biodiversity and that this biodiversity is very resilient to fire. However, people and property are more seriously affected, so the overriding aim of all fire management plans is to protect people and property. The challenge is to plan for concomitant positive environmental outcomes.

The main factor influencing the severity of a fire is the weather, and models predict that climate change will result in more days of extreme fire weather. Hazard reduction burning is accepted as the major defence against fuel build-up, one of the factors influencing fire intensity, but the Victorian fires showed that in a fire driven by such severe weather conditions there was *no detectable difference between areas that had been previously burned or not* [italics added, Ed.]. Therefore, burning alone will not afford protection and all the other measures being discussed are also necessary.

Burning regimes

It was accepted though that for protection, there must be an increase in the area being subjected to hazard reduction burns and that the frequency and intensity of this should be determined scientifically, taking into

account the regeneration abilities of the various vegetation communities. Burning regimes must be determined based on the minimum and maximum thresholds for timing and intensity, but between these values variability must be built in to account for differences between individual species and vegetation communities across the landscape.

Adding to this variability prescribed burns should reflect the "patchiness" seen in natural fires. Unburned islands should survive as refuges especially for fauna. In addition, research results reported by one of the speakers indicated that too frequent burning can be counterproductive, not only for biodiversity outcomes but for fuel reduction because the insects and microflora necessary for litter decomposition are destroyed. We learned that for positive biodiversity outcomes in addition to fuel reduction hot fires are essential. Unless the soil is heated to 80 degrees the soil seed bank can be destroyed rather than germinated.

The combination of natural and hazard reduction burns has been shown to be deleterious to some bird species, and some vegetation communities do not respond positively to high intensity fires and need to be protected. Among these is the area in south western WA that is a world biodiversity hotspot, and the wet tropics region of Queensland. Weed invasion such as buffelgrass in Central Australia can increase the fuel load and hence the intensity of fires over that produced by the native grasses with which the vegetation has evolved. This has led to increased death of some species (eg *Callitris* and *Hakea*).

Good news story

A very good news story of an ecological burn carried out after much community consultation and very careful preparation by Willoughby Council was reported. The area treated was a harbourside bush reserve surrounded by suburbia. The exclusion of fire for many years had resulted in a monoculture of *Allocasuarina littoralis* where the thick ground-cover of needles and exclusion of sun by the canopy had prevented the germination of most of the expected understorey species. After a high intensity burn the area returned to classic Hawkesbury sandstone vegetation and was recolonised by birds, reptiles, echidnas and wallabies.

The problem of translating theory into practice was highlighted and explored. Problems included



A tree destroyed by the 2003 fires on the lower slopes of Mt Taylor in north east Kambah, turned into a memorial by nearby residents. Photo Barrie Ridgway

communication with the larger community and the media, loss of "knowledge capital" by changing personnel and of course manpower and financial constraints. Speakers warned of thinking that we knew all the answers when there were still so many unknowns and probably "unknown unknowns".

Other topics covered included the progress in fire management planning across NSW (by the Rural Fire Service) and in national parks (by National Parks and Wildlife Service) and the basis for these plans, the environmental effects of fire retardants and the problems of sediment in watercourses caused by fires. Pre-European indigenous fire use for food plant conservation and hunting was also covered.

I'm aware that by picking out a few points from a two-day conference I have over simplified issues and reported statements and conclusions out of context. Please blame my reporting rather than the conference. The NCC runs conferences with an environmental theme every two years. I learned from others that they are consistently good in content, organisation and value.

Lyndall Hatch

The draft regional maps of the ACT Strategic Bushfire Management Plan (SBMP) have been released in the last two months and your committee has submitted extensive comments on the planned prescribed burns in Namadji National Park and other public lands. The full final draft management plan is now available for public comment. Ed.

NPA art at Gudgenby Cottage

Muriel has wrapped herself in warm gear, packed her stool, sustenance, pencils, a sketch pad and mini watercolour paint box (a gem in its own right) and headed off **that** way. Kathy has risen early and with her camera has set off on her own quest. Martin, another camera carrier, has also been out early (and late). Christine has set up her sewing machine on the lounge room table, and then set off to explore the rocky ridge to the north-east. Later she is dabbing a paint-loaded sponge over some sort of super high-tech paper, iron at the ready. Babette, also with camera, has set off

purposefully to gather images for some sort of production (as it turns out, without enough memory on her camera card! So how much is enough?). Adrienne has been painstakingly untangling very fine silver-coloured wire from some old computer cable and is bemoaning the fact that “the eagle’s head is just not right”. Fiona divides her time between writing, sitting in the



Christine Goonrey looks across the Gudgenby Valley from the hill east of Gudgenby Cottage and the Homestead. Photo Adrienne Nicholson

(occasional) sun stitching a heritage tapestry of native flowers, and making sorties out along the nearby river and creek. Esther sets off (**twice**) over the ridge to locate the remains of Rowleys Hut—the Rendezvous Creek one. Michael heads off to the Gudgenby bush regeneration area for a self-improvement day identifying tree species and surveying recent plantings, later to produce an installation from his newfound knowledge.

What on earth am I talking about? Reality prevails, so I admit that not all these activities happened on just one day. But they **did** all happen, over the last week of May, when Namadgi National Park rangers generously allowed NPA members access to the Gudgenby Cottage for a week of *NPA Art at Gudgenby Cottage*.

What a wonderful time we had. Adrienne and Fiona called the cottage home for the whole week, while others came for one, two or three nights. The Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group filled the cottage on the Monday night, enabling them to put in two concerted days of (artistic) tree planting. Max Lawrence brought a group out on Wednesday for a *Bulletin*-packing session. Did you notice how creatively your June *Bulletin* was packaged?

We had visitors on a couple of

days, but mostly the idea was to do our own thing through the daytime and get together at night to eat, yarn, discuss our projects and entertain ourselves around the warming fire. With the changing population, it was interesting how each evening was very different; sometimes jovial, sometimes quite enquiring, sometimes with deep and meaningful discussions, sometimes quiet with concentration.

Artists at work

Muriel sketched and painted in the field, as well as coming “home”

to develop her work in the comfort of the cottage.

Christine made exploratory sorties to immerse herself in the landscape, then returned to work her magic with fabric, paint, sponges, spray bottle, iron and sewing machine. I am unable to describe her marvellous stitched landscapes, so you must search them out yourself. Several photographers were out and about, early in the misty mornings and late in the chilly twilights, each with their own way of seeing and interpreting the land.

Adrienne was recycling very fine wire retrieved from an earlier NPA work party at the Honeysuckle Creek tracking station site; weaving small medallions into both representative and abstract shapes. Fiona continued to work on a heritage tapestry depicting native flora (it **will** be finished one day). She also did some photography, some writing, and of course the yarns from her memories of NPA history and early outings are both interesting and entertaining—and important. Michael used his time to develop his knowledge of the Gudgenby bush regeneration area; he also had a considerable input into the culinary delights of the week.

We heard, and often saw, many dingoes in a variety of colours, but all of very characteristic build. One platypus was sighted (definitively, but briefly), water rats splashed around stream edges, the eastern grey kangaroos were in their



Max Lawrence brought a group of members (and friends) out to the cottage to package up the June Bulletin. Great surroundings for this exercise. Photo Adrienne Nicholson

usual Gudgenby Valley abundance, mostly taking little notice of our presence. Red-necked wallabies were plentiful, as were wedge-tailed eagles (to me an icon of this area) and the scarlet robins perching atop dead *Verbascum* stems.

Everyone returned from their excursions with tales to tell of what they had seen, done and felt. Mossy rocks, huge boulders, last remnants of summer's flowers, sunburned red-trunked trees, flocks of seed-eating birds (finches, wrens, parrots), etc. And over the week all this experienced through a variety of weathers; cold and mizzily to sunny and warmish, to windy and wet; clouds of all kinds, rainbows, sunrises and sunsets; we enjoyed the lot.

The nights were decidedly cold and it was just as well we had extra bedding available. There were some opportunities to sit in the sun on the front veranda during the day, but the lounge room and its fire were inviting much of the time. Some of the "over-the-hills-and-far-away" explorers came home somewhat cold and bedraggled, ready for a warming cuppa (or some such) and for a wondrous warm shower!

A wonderful asset

Restoration of this cottage was initially undertaken by the Kosciuszko Huts Association (see Babette Scougall's short article in the June *Bulletin*). It is now being made very comfortable by the park

rangers, and is a wonderful community asset. There is electricity and hot water, and a super septic system. Wood stoves are being installed in the lounge room and kitchen; these will improve heating efficiency, and safety. Bit by bit, furniture is being brought in as the future for the cottage is developed.

The rangers are determining criteria for non-commercial community use of the cottage. They have set an overnight number limit of eight people, which will include one or two small tents within the precinct. I had thought that this restriction was a bit severe, but having stayed there for a week, with seven the maximum number sleeping overnight, I believe this is a realistic limit. Eight people using the cottage is plenty! And if people are trying to carry out various activities, they will benefit from lots of fine days so they can be outside a lot of the time.

Another of my feelings was that



Christine Goonrey (left) discussing her work with Nyssa Skilton and Karleen William from the Canberra Times. Fiona MacDonald Brand (right) told the journalists about the NPA's formation, activities and history. This resulted in a very sympathetic article in the Sunday Canberra Times of 7 June 2009.

Above photo Adrienne Nicholson



winter's short days do limit some activities. Despite the great atmosphere of the weather we encountered, I'd rather have longer days/shorter nights, not only so one wouldn't have to contend with the cold! We had brought some firewood of our own, but the rangers had generously provided a woodpile as well. We used most of it!

Adrienne Nicholson

Three scenes at the cottage

An early morning scene

A mob of kangaroos feeding near the cottage. They move slowly, nibbling, resting, scratching, then suddenly all are upright, heads turned in one direction. Following their gaze you see a large

white dingo climbing along the ridge, followed by another, then another. The kangaroos are alert, but not yet alarmed. During the night there has been howling so perhaps the hunt had been a successful one.

other wrens fly into the shrub near me, just to eye me off.

A night scene

The fire crackling in the living room fireplace. Four figures, heads bent, sitting around the table. Christine at her sewing machine creating a work of art—shapes bubbling over her streakily dyed material. Adrienne concentrating on her finely woven pictures within circles. All woven with fine coated copper wire found in the dump of the space tracking station. Muriel, using her tiny box of watercolour paints to touch up two lovely paintings done "in the field" over two afternoons. She has captured the line of hills around Gudgenby valley and a dainty daisy plant in straggly grass. Fiona working on a wildflower tapestry, begun 40 years ago and now nearing completion. Over this scene of peaceful companionship the quiet of the cold starry night.

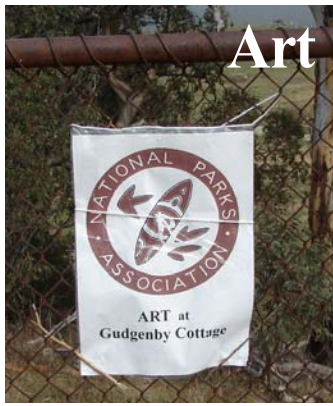
Fiona MacDonald Brand



A mid-afternoon scene

A walk by the ponds of the Gudgenby River, hoping to spy a platypus or two quietly gliding in the dark brown water. A flock of yellow-rumped thornbills flies across from the big black sallee (or muzzle tree?) to a patch of scrub on the river's other side. A small flock of fairy wrens lands on three tall stumps in the middle of the cane grass. The western sun illuminates the lime-green growth on the huge wall of rock slab behind the stumps, making a beautiful backdrop to the four wrens silhouetted on one log and a single wren on the other. Two

Fiona MacDonald Brand at work on her tapestry. Photo Esther Gallant



Art on display

The *Art at Gudgenby Cottage* week was not only a great success, leaving participants with lots of good memories, it also resulted in lots of good art and craft. A good sample of the works was on display at the Namadgi Visitor Centre through June and July. Thanks to those who provided work for the display.

Above. Sign on the gate to lead people in. Photo Esther Gallant
Below. Display case at the Namadgi Visitor Centre



Above. Christine Goonrey's colour-washed and machine-stitched landscape work (in progress).

Left. Adrienne Nicholson's wire-weave wedge-tailed eagle.
Below. Muriel Story Edwards' sketches (not yet finished) in the display case at the visitor centre.

Photos Adrienne Nicholson



Lower right. Esther Gallant's photo of *Banksia marginata* (silver banksia), Rendezvous Creek Valley.

Gudgenby Bushies plant

The Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group worked against the clock in May and June to plant out nearly 600 trees before winter closed in and it became too late for planting. Four work parties were held during the period with between nine and 15 people rolling up each day to help. Snow was on the ground at Frank and Jack's Hut when the last of the trees were planted!

Lanyon High School kindly propagated about 500 seedlings for the group, with the balance coming from Hazel Rath. The bulk of the seedlings were *Eucalyptus stellulata* (black sallee), *E. rubida* (candlebark) and *E. viminalis* (ribbon gum). However other species like *E. pauciflora* (snow gum), *Banksia marginata* (silver banksia) and *E. dives* (broad-leaved peppermint) were also well represented.

The plantings were at Eleanor's Grove along Hospital Creek, on

Croajingalong Slope, on Amanda's Slope near Frank and Jack's Hut, in the north gully on Old Boboyan Road near Yankee Hat car park and along Gudgenby River.

A highlight was the overnight stay at Gudgenby Cottage during the two-day work party in late May. We shared dinner and drinks by the fire, followed by an entertaining medley from Martin Chalk with his guitar. The local talent, aka dingoes, did their best to continue the entertainment into the wee hours!

All in all, a very successful series of work parties for the Gudgenby Bushies.

Many thanks must go to Parks, Conservation and Lands staff for their ready support in delivering our trailer to the various sites and also in providing and keeping filled a 1000-litre tank, which made the task of watering the new plants so much easier.

Finally, a special thanks to Clive Hurlstone for his planning efforts,



including a couple of cycling trips around the area and his brilliant strategy for removing the "straight edge" on Croajingalong Slope.

Michael Goonrey

Kalamurina—outback reserve worth protecting



In June 2009 NPA founding member Fiona MacDonald Brand's travels took her to Kalamurina, a former cattle station which was recently acquired by the Australian Wildlife Conservancy. Here are some of her impressions.

Kalamurina borders on the eastern shore of Lake Eyre. This beautiful sandhill, claypan area consists of 1.7 million acres (687 973ha) and is 650km north of



Adelaide and west of the Birdsville Track. It lies between the Simpson Strzelecki Dunes Bioregion and the Lake Eyre National Park, making a protected area across two states of more than 18 million acres (7 284 420ha).

Kalamurina is watered by the Warburton River which is fed by the Georgina and Diamantina rivers. Before the Warburton River empties into Lake Eyre it is fed by the Macumba and Kaliakoopah creeks.

Warburton Creek generally flows every two years, but exceptional rain events are required for the floodwaters to reach Lake Eyre and this happens only once a decade. However, the river breaks its banks about every four years, producing a flush of green growth in the surrounding floodplains.

This is exactly what has happened in 2009. Shallow lakes have formed on the claypans, lush pasture of native spinach covers the flats nearby, the saltbush is fleshy and beautiful grasses and flowering groundcovers have appeared. The rivers and creeks are always lined with coolibah, river red gums and inland paperbark. The red sandhills are sparsely vegetated with a hummock grass and cane

grass. The swales between have shrublands of low bluebush, umbrella bush and fine-leaved senna. Saltbush is abundant.

The area once was the habitat of small mammals, but many species are now extinct or threatened. Predation by cats and foxes and competition with rabbits for food have been the main causes for the decline in animal populations. Only the Ampurta, a small carnivorous marsupial, is still surviving but is threatened.

Dingoes help in keeping the cat numbers down, but management will have to develop aggressive programs to rid the area of cats, foxes, camels and pigs.

Camping beside the Warburton River is a delight with flocks of budgerigars, galahs and little corellas visiting daily. Red and orange chats, woodswallows, white-winged fairy wrens, variegated fairy wrens and red-capped robins inhabit the sandhill vegetation with a rare sighting of an Eyrean grasswren. Brown song larks were in one creek overflow area. Raptors patrolled the skies and egrets and herons fished the waterways. With a little cloud about, sunsets and sunrises were dramatic in colour.

Groups like the Australian Wildlife Conservancy need the support of environmental groups and individuals. Much money needs to be donated to heal and protect large tracts of damaged land so that the diversity of flora and fauna remains intact.

Fiona MacDonald Brand

Photos.

Top left. Overflow from the Warburton River.

Top right. Coolibah tree in the Overflow from the Warburton River.

Left. The sandhill country.

Photos Fiona MacDonald Brand

Scientific kangaroo management

Kangaroos seem to be getting bad press of late, caught up in the crossfire in law courts and fenced-off Defence property, between land managers and animal rights activists. Dr Don Fletcher and Claire Wimpenny from Parks, Conservation and Lands addressed the NPA ACT June general meeting, their timely topic *Research on Eastern Grey Kangaroos in the ACT*, explicitly linking science and policy.

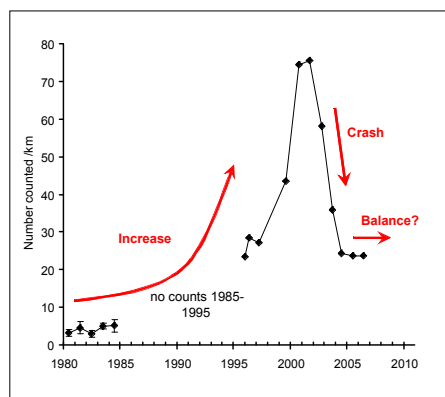
The only way to settle such disputes and to serve as the basis for rational land management decisions is *evidence-based research* (science), and Don and Claire gave a fascinating insight into one aspect of their research work in the ACT which commenced in 1997.

Police attend twice as many road accidents involving kangaroos in the ACT region as the rest of NSW though these rarely cause fatalities. Motorcyclists are at higher risk than cyclists or car occupants. The NRMA says the average cost of each car repair is about \$2000.

This higher accident rate could be related to the lack of commercial harvesting in the ACT, more than one million kangaroos are shot each year for commercial purposes in western NSW and 62 000 per year in a new harvesting zone north-east of the ACT, between Braidwood and Goulburn.

International research on herbivores in temperate zones on other continents, and research on red and western grey kangaroos in semi-arid western NSW, may not translate to eastern grey

kangaroos in temperate ACT so local evidence must be collected. A correlation between kangaroo numbers and vegetation may be intuitive but the exponential growth in kangaroo numbers between 1980 and 2001 at Googong (marked 'Increase' in the figure) is dramatic. The drought would no doubt have reversed the growth but not as rapidly as the cull by shooting did ('Crash' in the figure). Regular shooting (management) will be required to prevent the next rapid increase and subsequent crash in numbers to keep them in balance, the third phase of the *irruption* process ('Balance?') in the figure from Forsyth and Caley (2006).



Don showed the effects of grazing on vegetation load in fenced-off areas where only kangaroos grazed; where cattle and kangaroos grazed; and where there was no grazing in a wooded zone, using Google photographs of the Belconnen area. He emphasised that sophisticated investigation methods are required to

examine some of the more important questions asked by managers.

Satellite tracking

Claire then took over from Don to talk about a satellite tracking scheme to investigate questions about the kangaroo's home-range and movements, to evaluate their movement in relation to roads and vehicles and see whether it was seasonal. Non-invasive collars have been fitted on 25 kangaroos at 16 sites in the ACT. They capture and store GPS data every hour on selected days for removal and data retrieval in 2011. Some preliminary data were collected at sites in Kambah, Hackett and Mt Ainslie when collars were changed.

The data give fascinating snapshots into kangaroo behaviour: Their home-range may be quite limited, one male stayed within a 3km x 1km area bordering a major road; kangaroos seem to be reluctant to cross major roads but may use underpasses to access greener pastures in the suburbs at night; some kangaroos made a bee-line for a favourite grazing spot in built-up areas whilst another grazed widely, before returning to the cover of bushland in the day.

The research may be used for future road design, perhaps even for upgrades and fence design along existing roads. Cost will be a critical criterion. Research will guide management of kangaroos impacting urban areas but kangaroos in Gudgenby are safe from culling, for now.

Kevin McCue

Junior Rangers on the run!



Hannah and Caitlin wearing some of the junior ranger badges from their US trip.

Some of the great pleasures of travelling are those little surprises that jump out when you least expect them.

Last year Amanda and I took our daughters, Hannah and Caitlin, on a four state tour of the USA. The middle part of the trip involved several weeks of travelling through the dry lands of Utah and Arizona. Our "grand circuit" took in Arches, Canyonlands, Canyon De Chelly, the Grand Canyon, Zion and Bryce National Parks as well as the Navajo National Monument. Each was a truly superb experience and a destination in itself.

However, constant travelling is sometimes a bit of a trial for younger family members; so we were pleasantly surprised to discover the US National Parks Service's Junior Ranger Program.

The program is run in each of the national parks, historical sites or national monuments that has a visitors' centre, and at each stop, our girls would look forward to a new national park and the opportunity of investigating what was on offer.

Each location has its own unique activity book focusing on the things that make that national park or monument special. The books or sheets contain a range of activities of varying difficulty designed for specific age groups.

To become a Junior Ranger the child must complete the activities identified for his or her level. Most activities involved completing questions and puzzles or sketching within the activity books. However, some locations

(continued next page)

Tree-rings and river flows in Namadgi

The guest speaker at NPA's May general meeting was Dr Matthew Brookhouse, a Research Fellow at the Fenner School of Environment and Society, ANU. Matthew's subject was "A tree-ring perspective of climate and river flow in Namadgi National Park and beyond".

The Australian Alps, including Namadgi, are the major source of water for south eastern Australia. All of our major rivers here have their headwaters in the Alps, and these rivers are used to generate power for the electricity grid, to provide irrigation water for rural industries and communities, and to provide water for urban populations, most notably Canberra and Melbourne. They are, of course, also a very important part of the natural environment in which all things exist.

The peak river flows, and therefore the important recharge times for these catchments, are during the snow melt months of August, September and October. We know there are wide—often dramatic—variations in the extent of seasonal flows, and in particular that the trend in recent years has been downward.

But is it really due to climate change, or have long drought periods been a historical feature of the Alps?

Climate data for this region exists only for a mere hundred years or so, and river flow data exists for considerably less than a hundred years. This is a scant statistical record on which to base water investment and management decisions critical to our continued wellbeing and even existence in this part of the world.

Our guest speaker's approach to this problem was to see if the period for which knowledge was available could be



Dr Matthew Brookhouse at work with his auger extracting a tree-ring sample, which he will place in a drinking straw for safe transport and handling.

Photo from Bureau of Resource Sciences website.

extended by analysis of the information contained in the growth rings of trees, some of which are known to live for many hundreds of years. This area of science is known as dendroclimatology, and has been extensively used in the northern hemisphere to study seasonal variations both within years and between years. Typically such variations will depend not only on climatic factors, but also on site, age, size, and disturbances such as fire, the fate of nearby trees, competition and insect attack.

Chronologies extended

It was long thought that Australian eucalypts were unsuitable for such analysis—their growth rings were considered to be either absent or unreliable, they often varied according to insect factors, and besides the trees were considered "young". Matthew's research challenges these preconceptions.

He found by focusing preferably on a single tree type, and by very carefully

cross-matching tree-ring series he was able to replicate and extend chronologies, and obtain evidence of consistency between samples. The critical factor was to ensure that the rings from all of the various samples were correctly cross-matched against particular years. As to the "youth" of Australian trees, one snow gum under study on Bimberri was dated at 375 years.

The research being conducted by Matthew and his team in the Brindabellas involves samples of snow gums (*Eucalyptus pauciflora*) at various elevations. In cross referencing the data obtained from the tree-rings against actual weather and stream flow data back to 1962–63, it was found that rainfall was more important at lower levels, and temperature at the higher levels. Importantly, it was found there tended to be an inverse relation between tree growth at the upper levels and observed August rainfall and river flows. This was interpreted to mean that the trees didn't do so well in wetter seasons when there was a big snow cover, but the rivers of course thrived on such conditions.

Work is now also being conducted on extending this research to Mt Baw Baw and the Melbourne water catchment, and it is planned eventually to build an Alps wide tree-ring chronology. Consideration is also being given to extending the work to non-eucalypt trees such as mountain plum pine (which can reach 600 years of age). The results produced to date suggest there have been other extended dry periods in our region in the past, but the big drying trend evident since 1960 certainly ranks up there with them.

Max Lawrence

Junior Rangers on the run! *(continued)*

required hands-on activities such as the picking up of, say, three pieces of litter (to be carefully supervised by parents). And let me tell you that by the time a horde of Junior Rangers had gone through, there wasn't much litter left. It also made the children really aware of litter as an issue.

Once the allotted activities were completed it was time to front up to the visitors' centre to have the book checked. Some rangers would ask additional questions and those rangers with enough time (the centres can get very busy) would also lead the children through the recital of a pledge.

The special reward for all of this was

a Junior Rangers badge, a replica of the USNP shield-shaped badge stamped with the national park's name and logo. Our girls picked up 10 badges from visits, which included out-of-the-ordinary parks such as Alcatraz and the USS *Missouri* in San Francisco.

Rod Griffiths



Some of the badges and booklets issued by the US National Parks junior ranger program.

Photos Amanda Caldwell

The NPA ACT is working with Parks, Conservation and Lands in the development of a similar program, Ranger for a Day. We hope to stage it as an activity later this year.



Glenburn/Burbong historic sites—an update

In the December 2008 *Bulletin* I outlined some significant work that Parks, Conservation and Lands had recently undertaken and some minor works planned for the rest of the 2008–09 financial year.

The bad news

I wrote to the Chief Minister on 10 December 2008 seeking his support for more funds to be allocated in the 2009–2010 budget for further work, particularly at the Glenburn and Collier’s homesteads and the Glenburn shearing shed complex. After an exchange of letters he advised on 17 March 2009 that the Government could not allocate any further financial resources to the project at this time. This was confirmed in another letter on 24 April 2009.

In my response of 4 May 2009, I said that I was saddened greatly by his letter. I also told him that I was forwarding copies of my response to the National Trust of Australia (ACT), the Canberra and District Historical Society and the National Parks Association of the ACT because of their strong interest in the conservation of the ACT’s historic sites. At a historic archaeology workshop organised by the Canberra Archaeology Society on 23 May 2009, Marilyn Folger, on my behalf, provided information on the state of play at Glenburn/Burbong including my response of 4 May 2009 to Mr Stanhope.

The good news

In March and April 2009 I continued leading walks to Glenburn/Burbong. These are a great way of widening knowledge of, and interest in, the area.



On 6 March I took Dianne and James Thorne and their families to visit the two homesteads. Dianne is the grand daughter and James, the great-grandson of John James Edmonds who built the slab hut component of Glenburn Homestead in 1897. Neither had been there before and it was an emotional visit for them.

Diane and James had been unable to attend the visit to Glenburn Homestead arranged at the time of the very large Edmonds family reunion at Bungendore in March 2008. At the reunion, I arranged to get several family photos including one of John James Edmonds and his wife Agnes May (nee Worthington) in their wedding finery.

They were married in 1897 but the photo was not taken until 1903, presumably when a photographer became available to take a formal portrait. Some of their descendants at the reunion told me that Agnes May could have had a little difficulty fitting into her wedding dress—by then she had had three children.

On the weekend of April 18 and 19, I took 22 members of the St Paul’s and St David’s walking group and 13 walkers from NPA to view some of the sites. Most had not previously visited the area. All were impressed by the work that Parks, Conservation and Lands had done but were concerned with lack of progress on the conservation task overall.

In April 2009, the National Trust of Australia (ACT) through Dr Peter Dowling and Eric Martin and Associates completed a Conservation Management Plan for the ruins of Collier’s Homestead and the nearby area. The plan was accepted by the ACT Heritage Council in the same month. Unfortunately, however, that acceptance did not bring with it any money for conservation works.

Sites nominated

Also in April 2009, Eric Martin, President of the National Trust of Australia (ACT), suggested that I nominate the Glenburn/Burbong sites to the Trust’s Our Heritage at Risk program.

I did so, saying that the three top priorities were to update and implement the 24 recommendations made by Peter Dowling and Carol Cosgrove on Glenburn Homestead in the Trust’s 2002

Left. John James and Agnes May Edmonds in their 1897 wedding clothes. A studio portrait taken at Telsa Studios, Sydney in 1903.

Right. Dianne and James Thorne at Glenburn Homestead in March 2009. Photo Col McAlister

report *Glenburn (Kowen) Conservation Management Plan*, to implement the Conservation Management Plan on the ruins of Collier’s Homestead recently accepted by the ACT Heritage Council, and to prepare a Conservation Management Plan on the Glenburn Shearing Shed/Shearers’ Quarters Complex.

Jon Stanhope told me in a letter of 8 July 2009 that Parks, Conservation and Lands and the Heritage Unit have applied for Commonwealth funding “...to complete urgent remedial works to the historical sites at Kowen Forest ...”.

On 28 July 2009, the Trust’s list of the top 11 ACT Heritage at Risk sites was announced. One of the sites was “Kowen Historic Sites” encompassing Glenburn Homestead, the Glenburn Shearing Shed/Shearers’ Quarters Complex and William Collier’s Homestead Ruin. The listing raises the profile of the sites but, again, brings no money with it to help fund conservation works.

NPA letter to Jon Stanhope

In late July 2009, our President, Christine Goonrey, wrote to Jon Stanhope setting out the NPA’s long term interest in the Glenburn/ Burbong area. She expressed pleasure at the application for Commonwealth funding, drew attention to the National Trust’s Heritage at Risk listing, and asked that he reconsider his decision on funding if the application for Commonwealth funding was not successful.

Christine also extended an invitation to Jon Stanhope and his staff to inspect the major sites to see what is needed. She said that the area is a valuable and exciting resource and a microcosm of our local history: the fact it has been preserved at all is a gift we cannot let slip through our fingers.

I will keep members informed of further developments and remain optimistic.

Col McAlister



Winter outings

Ferals sighted at Snowy Flat

On 31 May 2009 we met at 7 am at the Bunnings carpark in Tuggeranong. Brian Slee was my only companion for this walk, no doubt due to the weather, which was cloudy and cold with some drizzle forecast. We started the steep ascent of Stockyard Spur from Corin Dam at 8 am. After about an hour we reached the Stockyard Spur fire trail and walking was easier. The vegetation was wet from condensation and light drizzle which brought out the colours on the tree trunks.

About 500m before the trail joins the Mt Franklin Road we headed south through snow gums to the eastern end of Snowy Flat where Snowy Flat Creek begins its cascade down to Corin Dam. We crossed the creek at the cascades to avoid any damage to the sphagnum and any corroboree frogs that may have been about. The conditions were rather different from when I was last here in January when the weather was pleasant, the flowers were out and there was a clear view to Mt Gingera.

As we skirted around the eastern side of the flats just below the tree line we unexpectedly encountered two feral species.

The first was a 4m high conifer wilding, which Brian thought was a spruce, but in any case looked very similar to the trees in the arboretum near Pryors Hut about 500m away. As we were inspecting the wilding we heard trail bikes travelling south, at what seemed to be high speed, along Mt Franklin Road. This was confirmed later by another walker we met at Pryors Hut. We then came across another 4m wilding within 100m metres of the first. All feral species were later reported.

We continued south along the edge of Snowy Flat till we reached the Mt Franklin Road and headed for Pryors

Hut for lunch because by now it was windy and very cold. Despite the relative warmth in the hut—5 degrees inside when the nearby Mt Ginini weather station was recording 2 degrees—we decided not to linger any longer than the time to eat lunch. By 3 pm we were back at the car.

Pryors Hut in the snow

On our walk to Snowy Flat in May 2009, Brian Slee and I talked about wanting to see Pryors Hut in the snow. Five weeks later on July 5, a few days after the first decent snowfall for the winter, we had our opportunity.

We parked the car at the locked gate at Mt Franklin and walked south along Mt Franklin Road to Pryors Hut. The snow was at least 30cm deep on the road for most of the way and was hanging heavily in the trees. The weather was perfect, with a blue sky and no wind.

We reached Pryors Hut for lunch, made a quick trip to Snowy Flat (the snow was not deep enough to support our weight so we made slow progress) and then walked for three hours back to the car.

It was a tiring day (20km in eight hours mostly on snowshoes), but a magnificent and very memorable one.

Mike Bremers



*Above. Brian Slee with one of the ferals at Snowy Flat.
Photo Mike Bremers
Below. Mike Bremers on the Mount Franklin Road on the way to Pryors Hut.
Photo Brian Slee*



Reserve now predator-proofed

The predator-proof fence surrounding Mulligan's Flat Nature Reserve is modelled on a sanctuary fence at Arid Recovery in Roxby Downs, South Australia, which has allowed the successful re-introduction of native species into that area. Costing \$1.3 million, the 11.5km fence encloses 484ha of the reserve.

The Chief Minister and Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Jon Stanhope, marked the completion of the fence on June 10.

“The new predator-proof fence at Mulligan's Flat will create a protected woodland sanctuary,” Mr Stanhope said. “It will help to preserve the highly vulnerable Box-Gum Woodland within the reserve.”

He said feral animals, such as cats, rabbits and foxes will be excluded from the reserve, and eventually it was hoped to reintroduce native species not seen in the area for over 50 years.

The woodland remained open for public use, with 20 self-closing gates

located along the sanctuary's perimeter.

Solar power is used to power the gates, fence electrics and animal surveillance devices.

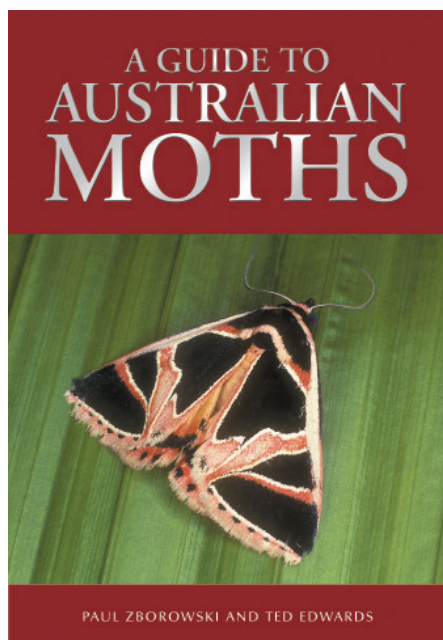
A research project between the Australian National University, the CSIRO and the ACT Government within Mulligan's Flat and Goorooyarroo Nature Reserves is investigating how woodlands should be managed to improve their condition.

Graeme Wicks

Book reviews

A Guide to Australian Moths

Paul Zborowski and Ted Edwards,
CSIRO Publishing, 2007
224 pages, \$44.95, 210 x 148mm



When it comes to a striking design and colour scheme, *Xenogenes gloriosa* is a winner. It is an arid area moth with geometrical patterns: roughly shaped black triangles outlined in white sit against a pale reddish brown background with darker smudges randomly placed. Black dots line the broad base of the wings. Two long and delicate antennae bend outwards and forwards. The moth features on the cover of the publication *A Guide to Australian Moths* and encourages the curious to look beyond the covers.

Paul Zborowski took the majority of the beautiful photos and Ted Edwards provided the text.

Just a casual glance through the book shows that superb designs, colours and tonal variations are characteristic of many other moths. Some are dramatic, like *Xenogenes gloriosa*. Others are subtle, like *Zelotypia stacyi* from the wet sclerophyll forests which “with its false eye markings is said to resemble the head of a goanna” (p. 42). Its subtlety lies in the different tones of brown marked with striations, zigzags and the eye shape. Adding to the artistic wonder is the fact that moth wings consist of a series of scales.

The purpose of the designs is often to deter predators or to act as camouflage.

Apart from its strong visual appeal, the guide is set out simply with clear descriptions and explanations for both

the amateur and professional. John Landy, former long distance runner who has a deep interest in moths, has written the preface, which together with the introduction, summarises key points: some moths are agricultural and household pests but on the positive side, others may provide a form of biological control as with the *Cactoblastis* moth introduced from Argentina to combat prickly pear (p. iii).

Leaf-litter moths from several families have larvae that perform a valuable service in nutrient recycling and reducing leaf litter in forests, as Ted Edwards explains elsewhere in his article in this *Bulletin*. Unfortunately “... although their critical importance has been recognised for some time, no studies of these moths in leaf litter have been funded” (p.74).

Moths also play a valuable role as pollinators and provide food for birds and small vertebrates.

What is strongly apparent throughout the guide is that the biology of many moths remains unknown and many aren't even named. This means that the status of such a moth as pest or valuable pollinator, or its potential as a means of biological control, is unknown. Also unknown is whether it might be an indicator of air, ground or water pollution.

Common questions

A valuable part of the guide is the initial section which includes questions that have been commonly asked over the years at the open day of the Australian National Insect Collection at CSIRO in Canberra. Extensive answers are provided. What is the difference between moths and butterflies? The difference isn't always great but, generally, moths have “antennae that are thread-like or feathery” while butterflies “always have antennae that have a marked club at the tip” (p.2). Just to be contrary, some moths, mostly day-flying, have clubbed antennae.

Moth larvae grow but the adult moth doesn't. It follows a high-energy diet by feeding on nectar, fermenting fruit or sap flows (p.5). A diagram on p. 4 shows the life cycle of the Hercules moth from egg through to the larval then the cocoon and pupal stages.

Australia has between 20 000 and 40 000 moth species and about 400 butterfly species (p.vii). Butterflies haven't adapted well to Australia's arid conditions while moths are both niche survivors and good generalists (p.22).

The guide contains 400 images, but it only includes 2 per cent of the Australian moths (p.vii). For further information, the reader is directed to the late I.F.B. Common's *Moths of Australia* (MUP, 1990).

If you thought plants difficult to identify, moths present even more of a challenge. Many moth parts are needed for identification but can easily be destroyed in the process. To help the general reader, the guide lists the main characteristics to look for under each moth family, in easy-to-read dot points: size, whether the head is hairy or smooth, how the wings are held (“steeply roof wise”), length of antennae and whether they're held alongside the wings or not. Photos of moths accompany the descriptions.

Another moth surprise is that the underneath has different colours and markings from above. Showing both views of specimens is too much to expect in a guide but perhaps one example would provide valuable graphic evidence of the different views to the uninitiated.

Moths in scats

Visual contrast and emphasis is given to different categories of moths with grey panels that summarise their characteristics. Included are scat moths, aquatic moths, nesting moths and the Bogong moths. Many intriguing facts emerge from the categories. The larvae of aquatic moths “can play a significant role as indicator species” of water quality (p.136).

The larva of *Telanepsia stockeri* feeds within a single koala scat “and
(continued next page)



Crypsiphona ocellaria, found widely throughout Australia, on a window pane showing its markings on the underside.

Photo Kevin McCue

Book reviews *continued*

when fully grown forms a cocoon within the eaten-out scat. The species is known only from adults reared from koala scats in the Tantawangalo State Forest, southern New South Wales" (p.71). The larvae of the small grey moth *Trisyntopa scatophaga* eat the excreta of golden shouldered parrot nestlings within the conical mounds of the termite *Amitermes scopulus* in Cape York Peninsula. They make a great difference to nest hygiene although nestlings survive just as happily in nests not occupied by larvae (p.72).

After Ken Green (National Parks and Wildlife Service of NSW) observed grass dying near Bogong moth sites in the Snowies in 2001, investigations revealed high levels of arsenic in the moths and soil. The source of the arsenic is still unknown and also the implications for the predators, possums and people who might eat the moths. "It may also be an interesting case of a pollutant being carried into the heart of a wilderness area by natural processes" (p.203).

Yellow-tailed black cockatoos will excavate the branches and trunks of trees where there are signs of coccid, xyloryctid or sometimes hepialid larvae (p.96). They can cause considerable damage to trees, especially if there is an infestation of larvae. The ungainly but intriguing black cockatoos can be seen in the endangered coastal sand dune habitat of the bangalay tree (*Eucalyptus botryoides*) feasting noisily and hungrily from acacias and banksia cones in August. If their habitat and associated food store is cleared they will go too.

A Guide to Australian Moths shows the beauty and diversity of moths, their role in Australia's ecosystem and the need to fill the blanks in the moth database. The value of taxonomy lies in identifying and knowing the biology of moths to better understand their roles in particular ecosystems and the relationship between them and certain plants, other insects, birds and small mammals. Climate change is gathering

pace and the introduction of exotic flora and fauna, whether deliberately or accidentally, is increasing.

To answer questions about environmental changes and to strengthen quarantine legislation, more research and resources are needed to extend the database of Australia's frequently overlooked moths. The statement "We need people who can identify moths and know about their biology and behaviour. In Australia the number of such people is dangerously few" (p. 31) is a succinct warning about the parlous state of moth taxonomy.

A Guide to Australian Moths gives you an overview of the evolution, life-cycle and characteristics of many of our moths. It explains their role in different ecosystems and opens your eyes to their beauty and diversity.

Judy Kelly

Exploring Tidbinbilla on Foot

Graeme Barrow
Dagraja Press, Canberra, 2009
52 pages, RRP \$18

This is an attractive booklet, emulating the standard set in the 2006 third edition of Barrow's *Walking Canberra's Hills and Rivers*. A green theme, introduced on the cover and carried through to the chapter headings, perhaps represents the regrowth that has taken place since the 2003 fires which almost destroyed Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve.

If a publication can have texture it is granite, which features throughout the booklet. Incidentally, you may have seen the cover reproduced in the *Canberra Times* (20 June 2009, p. 14) where the person in the photo (taken by Max Lawrence) is identified as NPA member, Col McAlister.

The majority of the 20 walks described in *Exploring Tidbinbilla on Foot* are within the Reserve, of one hour or less duration and rated easy or moderate. The details on each walk follow a pattern familiar to readers of the author's numerous publications on walks in the region: how to get to the start, the

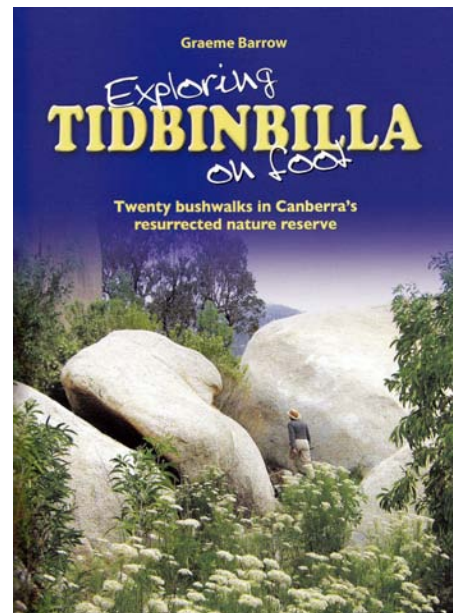
route of the walk, keen observations on history and what is to be seen. Plus 13 clear maps (including contour lines which went missing last publication) and more than 30 photos. Most of the walks have not been described in previous publications.

It is to be hoped that the booklet encourages visitors to Tidbinbilla, a significant proportion of whom would not be regular walkers, to take up the activity. On arrival at the visitor centre they receive a pamphlet providing brief notes on almost all these walks. It should be a neat segue from examining the pamphlet to purchase of the booklet, although price may be a deterrent, particularly as entrance fees are being reintroduced.

Long-time walkers will regard this booklet as "Tidbinbilla Lite": there is no track to Tidbinbilla Peak, Tidbinbilla Mountain, The Pimple, Johns Peak, Mt Domain. However, all are covered in the author's *Exploring Namadgi & Tidbinbilla* (1st ed.) and some in *Namadgi & Tidbinbilla Classics*, albeit before the fires.

So thank you Graeme Barrow for another excellent publication. It contains numerous walks I have not done and now look forward to undertaking.

Brian Slee



Breaking news: new nature link

A 24ha patch of land at Goorooyaroo will form a conservation corridor linking the ACT with NSW following the release of the land as part of the Federal Government's Commonwealth Property Disposals Policy. The land was a gift to the NSW Parks and Wildlife Service.

The service's southern director, Alistair Henchman, said the land, which will join with the Mulligan's Flat Nature Reserve, would complement the existing protection of the north-eastern side of the ACT.

The area was isolated and was home to threatened flora and fauna, including the spotted-tailed quoll, he said.

PARKWATCH

Heritage and tourism

The Alps joined the select list of Australia's iconic destinations in June 2008 under the banner of the National Landscape conservation/tourism initiative as announced by the Federal Minister for Tourism, Martin Ferguson. Being part of the initiative has brought with it significant resources—including support for a strategic tourism plan being developed as part of the initiative.

And then came the National Heritage Listing. In early November '08 the Federal Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Peter Garrett, made the announcement which applies to the Australian Alps National Parks—an area of over 1.6 million hectares spanning Victoria, NSW and the ACT. The listing is powerful because it gives the Alps national significance, and—backed by the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*—it ensures those special values which have been noted in the Listing will also be protected at a Federal level.

News from the Alps, Special Edition 37a 2009

Native forest mismanagement

In April, the NSW Auditor-General released a performance audit into the management of native forest by Forests NSW. The report found that native forest management is running at a loss—to the tune of \$14.4 million last year. It also found that logging is unsustainable—with trees being cut at a faster rate than they are regrowing. It concluded that the NSW government had incurred a major compensation risk, by signing long-term wood supply contracts without any legal avenues to reduce volumes if yields decreased.

National Parks Journal of NSW June–July 2009

Forest reviews news

The now well-established pattern of governments paying lip service to climate change concerns, while doing nothing at all meaningful to stop it or ameliorate its impacts, is alive and well in the NSW forest debate. There was no consideration of the threat represented by climate change when the NSW Forest Agreements were signed a decade ago.

Now the NSW Forest Agreements are finally being reviewed. However, the draft Terms of Reference released for the Reviews do not even mention climate change and there is no requirement to address or consider it. ...

This needs to change. It is crucial that the Forest Reviews fully address the

likely impacts of climate change adaptation and mitigation. The final Terms of Reference need to be sufficiently broad to deliver on this.

Some climate change related matters that should be addressed include:

- Conducting an assessment of the carbon storage of NSW native forests
- Identifying and protecting corridors to enable species to adapt to climate change
- Increasing reservation of wetlands and floodplain Endangered Ecological Communities
- Prohibiting logging on steep slopes and improving soil erosion mitigation to address likely increases in rainfall intensity
- Conducting an assessment of forest species that are at risk from climate change
- Calculating the long-term water volumes forgone due to logging in a changing environment and evaluating the financial and social impacts of diminished water supplies on affected regional communities.

National Parks Journal of NSW June–July 2009

Minister speaks on tourism

NPA [NSW] and other environment groups are continuing the campaign against new tourist accommodation in national parks. In April, Deputy Premier and Minister for the Environment, Carmel Tebbutt, wrote ... "The Government certainly has no intention of allowing large-scale developments such as major resorts and hotels, theme parks, cinemas and golf courses to be built in parks and reserves."

This raises many questions. What do large-scale and major resorts mean? What exactly would be allowed? The only backstop to future government and commercial pressures is the national parks laws themselves, and this must be our primary defence. These laws are set to be changed, but we don't know exactly how.

NPA recently met separately with the Minister and the Head of NPWS, Sally Barnes to talk tourism. Sally Barnes said it is only eco-lodges, cabins and semi-permanent tents that are being proposed. The public has been denied the opportunity to comment on a concrete proposal to put new accommodation in national parks.

National Parks Journal of NSW June–July 2009

Many strategies, little time

The National Biodiversity Strategy Review Task Group is preparing

Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010-2020. A draft of the strategy was on exhibition during April and May. You can read the draft strategy and information on the review at www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/strategy/review.html. One of the six priority areas is "building ecosystem resilience"—a task becoming increasingly difficult as climate change accelerates and the landscape continues to be pushed to the brink by invasive species, land clearing, mining and housing sprawl.

April also saw public submissions being called by the NSW Standing Committee on Natural Resource Management (Climate Change) for an inquiry into the quality of management strategies to address the impacts of climate change on biodiversity.

National Parks Journal of NSW June–July 2009

Healthy ecosystems campaign

The financial losses caused by the collapse of monetary markets late last year are dwarfed by the economic losses caused by the destruction of ecosystems and biodiversity. The economic impact on human well-being just from deforestation and land degradation alone has been estimated at between \$2-4.5 trillion per year, compared to the \$1-1.5 trillion lost on financial markets in the late 2008.

Our Healthy Oceans Campaign is working in partnership with other environment groups to convince the Federal Government to create a new protected area in south-west Western Australia. Less than 1% of this large and important region is protected, even though up to 90% of its marine species are unique to these waters.

The Healthy Country Campaign has produced a report From Paddock to Plate examining how we can care for our rural communities, land, water and wildlife by caring about what goes into our stomachs. Our work on environmental stewardship payments – rewarding farmers who take conservation action beyond their duty of care – was influential with decision makers in Canberra. In Victoria, ACF and other environment groups welcomed the Victorian government's decision to dramatically increase protection for 95,000 hectares of river red gum forests.

Work in the Healthy Rivers Campaign continues its urgent work to protect the Murray and Darling Rivers. Our Land and Water Reform paper launched in October 2008 was widely supported by local communities,

PARKWATCH *(continued)*

governments, irrigators and conservationists, and has led to development on innovative on-ground projects to target water buybacks for the Murray River. New work on expanding protection for Australia's wetlands will start in earnest over the coming months.

Habitat Australia April 2009

\$50 million for burning

The Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission has begun hearings and already there are significant calls to radically increase control burning programs. In advance of any recommendations from the Commission, the State Government has allocated \$50 million over 4 years to increase the amount of prescribed burning. But poor policy can be made in haste in difficult times.

The VPNA, along with many other organisations, has sent an initial written submission to the Royal Commission, which will be followed by further submissions and possibly personal presentations. With the commissioners stating that they will not allow for personal presentations at present, the strength of an initial written presentation is all the more important. It is a testament to the resilience and professionalism of our staff that they have been able to put together a well-informed initial submission in such personally trying times.

Parkwatch VNPA June 2009

Tasmanian forests at a crossroad

Tasmania's magnificent forests are still under threat. The state is at the crossroads of two possible futures. One is a future built on continued forest destruction with its resultant pollution, carbon depletion and bitter community division. The other is a future that embraces the potential to build sustainable industries and ensure Tasmania's natural environment remains one of Australia's most valued natural icons. And there at the crossroad is Gunns Ltd's proposal for a massive pulp mill in the Tamar Valley.

ACF has long held the view that the Federal Government should reject outright the pulp mill proposal because of the pollution it will pump into Bass Strait, the impact on fisheries and ocean health and because it will lock in the continued destruction of Tassie's old growth and high conservation value forests for many decades. Put simply, there is too much at stake for the pulp mill to go ahead.

The leading international authority on climate change, the Intergovernmental

Panel on Climate change, estimates the average carbon content per hectare in temperate forests is only 217 tonnes per hectare. Tasmania's tall wet eucalypts holds more than 1200 tonnes of carbon per hectare. ...

Federal Minister Peter Garrett has decided not to approve aspects of the mill's draft Environmental Impact Management Plan at this time. He announced he would not consider key modules of the pulp mill's Environmental Impact Management Plan until at least 2011. This decision means the company continues to have no operating licence for the mill. The delay provides a much needed window of opportunity for Tasmania to deeply reconsider its future.

Habitat Australia April 2009

Climate commitment needed

The appalling 2020 emission reduction target of 5–15% cuts (of 2000 levels) set by Australia in December last year and sold by Climate Change Minister Penny Wong as world-leading has been thoroughly outstripped, and the government soundly embarrassed, by the British Government's announcement that the UK will reduce their emissions by 34% of 1990 levels.

Members of the Association of Small Island States (AOSIS) have called all Annex-1 countries to adopt a cut of more than 40% of 1990 levels by 2020.

What is significant about the UK's announcement is the commitment that there will be no new coal-fired stations in Britain unless they are fitted with carbon capture and storage technology.

National Parks Journal of NSW June-July 2009

Culling of Fraser Island dingoes

The pure dingo is at serious risk of extinction in the wild. Extensive reductions in range and abundance have prompted the World Conservation Union (IUCN) to list the species as vulnerable, indicating that populations have declined by more than 30% over the last three generations. The population of dingoes on Qld Fraser Island is indicative of this decline. Although it is believed that they may be the purest strain of dingoes on the eastern Australian seaboard, the number of dingoes on Fraser Island is rapidly declining with an estimated population of only 140 remaining.

One of the main reasons for the dingo's decline is due to the management strategy employed by Qld Parks and Wildlife staff, which is strongly focussed on humans rather than the dingoes. Dingoes often seek out human company,

a main factor in their current decline on Fraser Island. ...

Sadly, 56 dingoes have been killed since 2001 as a result of the current management approach. Given broader conservation concerns about the dingo's decline, HSI is calling for killing to be replaced by better promotion of the understanding of dingo behaviour. By educating visitors on how best to interact with the dingoes it will result in a better experience for all, safety issues can be addressed, and killing replaced with the option of relocation only as a final resort.

Humane Society International Newsletter July 09

Selected by Hazel Rath

Article shortlisted

The excellent article by Tom Griffiths on the Victorian bushfires We have still not lived long enough, published in our last NPA Bulletin, has been shortlisted for the prestigious Alfred Deakin Prize in the 2009 Victorian Premier's Literary Awards.

The article was originally published on Inside Story, the online medium of the Institute for Social Research at Swinburne University in association with the Australian National University. The article in the Bulletin was a shortened version.

The winner was due to be announced on 1 September.

Fishing closures

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has welcomed the decision by Western Pacific Island nations to close an area three times the size of California to fishing activity to create the world's largest no-take zone.

The decision was reached in order to protect one of the world's last great tuna stocks, but according to the IUCN fishing in the economic exclusion zones around the islands, mainly carried out by foreign fleets, will continue at an unsustainable rate. The foreign fleets pay the island states for the right to fish.

The members of the Pacific Islands Roundtable for Nature Conservation met in Honiara from 28 June to the 2 July 2009 to discuss the state of the Pacific Islands environment and review commitments to the Pacific Islands Action Strategy for Nature Conservation and Protected Areas.


The product of those discussions was "Banking on Biodiversity", a detailed call to action in response to the growing threats to the Pacific Islands region.

Graeme Wicks

NPA notices

National Parks Association Calendar				
	Sep 09	Oct 09	Nov 09	Dec 09
Public holidays	–	Mon 5	–	Fri 25 Mon 28
General meetings	Thur 17	Thur 15	Thur 19	–
Committee meetings	Tues 1	Tues 6	Tues 3	Tues 1
25th anniversary of Namadgi ¹		Sun 11		
NPA ACT Christmas Party ²				Sun 13
Gudgenby Bush Regeneration ³	Sat 12	Sat 10	Sat 14	Sat 5 ⁴



Further details: **1** For details, see notice page 5 or *Burning Issues*
2 NPA ACT Christmas party. See notice below.
3 Meet Namadgi Visitor Centre 9:15am or Yankee Hat car park 10:00am
4 NB. Work party, with GBRG Christmas Party, is a week earlier than usual.

Red spot 

Subscriptions for 2009–10 are now overdue.

If there is a **red spot** on your *Bulletin* address sheet, the association's records show your current subscription has not been received. A renewal form is enclosed.

Please check

NPA Christmas Party

Sunday, 13 December
Gudgenby Cottage from 11.30am

Contacts: NPA committee members

This year our Christmas Party will again be at the Gudgenby Cottage. Turn right about 1km *before* Yankee Hat carpark (there will be an NPA sign by the road).


All the usual features; bring your picnic lunch and Christmas cheer — nibbles, Christmas cake and some drinks will be provided. Check *Burning Issues* for details.

It is with sadness that we note the passing of our members Mark Cleghorn and Alastair Morrison.

New members of the association

The NPA ACT welcomes the following new members:

Tom Griffiths and Libby Robin (welcome back), Graeme Cameron, Ian Warden and Sandra Lauffenburger, David Scott, Jill and Don White, Les and Sandy Dixon.



We look forward to seeing members at NPA activities.

GBRG Christmas party Saturday 5 December

(one week earlier than usual)

Work party in the morning, then GBRG Christmas party at lunchtime and an exploratory stroll around the regeneration area in the afternoon.

Front cover photographs

Main photo. *Christine Goonrey and Adrienne Nicholson at Gudgenby Cottage, participants in NPA's art week.*
Photo Fiona MacDonald Brand

Insets (left to right). *Henry Hatch lunching on the Orroral Cathedral Rock (sometimes called the Orroral Pyramid), Orroral Valley.*
Photo Barrie Ridgway

Mike Bremers on Mt Franklin Road in July (page 17).
Photo Brian Slee

Glenburn, historic photograph (page 16).
Photo provided by Col McAlister

This *Bulletin* was put together by
 Editors: Sonja Lenz and Kevin McCue
 Presentation: Adrienne Nicholson
 Sub-editor: Graeme Wicks

Bequests to your association

Last year the committee asked two members to look at setting up a provision for members to make bequests to the National Parks Association of the ACT, a recommendation from the National Parks Australia Council to help affiliated associations fund their conservation programs in a time of diminishing financial support from governments.

Making your will is one of the most important things you can do. It not only ensures that your affairs will be settled exactly as you wish, but by making a bequest to the National Parks Association of the ACT your voice will continue to be heard on the issues you believe in.

That is the leading paragraph in a statement you will see on the NPA ACT website encouraging members to continue supporting the association even after their death. The article continues

Because the NPA ACT is a not-for-profit, non-government, non-partisan and totally independent organisation, we depend on the generosity of our members and supporters to help fund our ongoing work. Your gift, large or small, can make a significant difference to our work, funding projects and campaigns which may not otherwise be possible. Your bequest also helps to ensure the financial sustainability and long term security of the NPA ACT.

We hope you will consider making a gift to NPA ACT in your will. A member of the committee will phone or meet with you to discuss any issues or provide more information should you so wish.

Kevin McCue

General Meetings

Third Thursday of the month, (not December or January)
8:00pm, Uniting Church hall, 56 Scrivener Street, O'Connor

Thursday 17 September

Reptiles of Southern Tablelands of New South Wales.

Geoff Robertson, President of
Friends of Grasslands, and
active member of the ACT
Herpetological Association.

In the ACT Herpetological Association, Geoff has focused on promoting education on local reptiles. On his and Margaret Ning's property, *Garuwanga*, he has identified thirty species of frogs and reptiles.

Thursday 15 October

Developing Sub-Regional Fire Management Plans for the ACT.

Dr Margaret Kitchin, Senior Forest
Ecologist, Research and Planning,
Parks, Conservation and Lands, and

Dylan Kendall, Senior Fire
Management Officer, Fire
Management Section, PCL.

Fire management is a highly complex and controversial part of land management which requires balancing a number of often competing objectives including the protection of life, property and the environment, conservation, production and recreation. This talk outlines the scientific principles and procedures followed by the ACT Government in developing 10 year fire management plans that attempt to achieve such a balance across the ACT.

Thursday 19 November

The Murrumbidgee River Corridor—the good, the bad and the ugly.

Brian Summers, Project Officer,
Lower Cotter Catchment, and

Darren Roso, Ranger In Charge,
North Rural Region, Parks,
Conservation and Lands.

The Murrumbidgee River Corridor has a long history of human pressure and this is evident in many degraded sites. The MRC revegetation project aims to revegetate the degraded areas to restore some of the original values and contribute to reversing the effects of climate change.

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
Full-time student/Pensioner	\$22		

All above categories of membership reduce to \$11 if a donation of \$100 or more is made.

Advertising

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

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



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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2



3

Gallery of fungi.

Fungi are often overlooked, even though their fruiting bodies are often colourful, intricate and amazing, as these pictures show.



4



7

Photos clockwise from top left

1. *Phlebopus marginatus* at Yankee Hat. Esther Gallant
2. *Calvatia* sp. at Scottsdale. Esther Gallant
3. *Scleroderma* sp. a little puff-ball fungus near Frank and Jacks Hut, Namadgi National Park. Kevin McCue
4. *Stereum hirsutum* on cork oak tree stump, Canberra. Esther Gallant
5. *Aseroe rubra*, starfish or anenome fungus, near Smokers Gap. Adrienne Nicholson
6. *Ileodictyon gracile*, a basket fungus, found in Aranda. Kevin McCue
7. *Amarita muscaria*, fly agaric at Avondale Gardens, northern Victoria. Esther Gallant



6

If you are interested in fungi, a good place to start is the Australian National Botanic Gardens website for fungi:

www.anbg.gov.au/fungi/



5