



# NPA *Bulletin*

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National Parks Association of the Australian Capital Territory Inc



**On safari in  
Timor Leste**



**The Darling  
River Run**



**Glenburn restoration  
under way**

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

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## From the president

On a recent joint NPA and Canberra Bushwalking Club walk, a query about what the NPA ACT was made me reflect on the breadth of our activities. The question was about whether the NPA ACT leads bushwalks and the answer to that is simple. Yes, yes, yes—providing opportunities for people to connect with the bush is one of our key functions. We have an excellent group of walks leaders who help the NPA ACT provide a wide range of walk types and other outdoor activities.

Where the NPA ACT stands out is that it is not just a bushwalking club; it actively campaigns for the conservation of our natural areas. Formal conservation reserves form a key part of the mechanisms to maintain viable ecosystems and we will continue to fight to ensure that sufficient resources are made available for the maintenance of the reserves. However, the NPA ACT also recognises that the formal reserve system needs to link in with private and public off-reserve conservation measures as part of a broad strategy to protect our natural ecosystems.

The NPA ACT seeks to facilitate understanding of our natural world through its highly regarded conferences and through its publications, website, stalls, exhibitions and member meetings.

The NPA ACT also gets its hands dirty through its own work parties or through the activities of the closely aligned Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group.

I outlined all these things in my response to the query. I'm proud to say that I'm a member of the NPA ACT, it is an organisation where its members lead by example.

In particular, I'd like to commend our immediate past president for all her accomplishments over the past five years. Well done, Christine. But the role of the president is lightened by the excellent work of the committee and the many other volunteers that help the NPA ACT in so many ways. Thanks to

all our members for your varied support.

At the September general meeting I outlined some of the committee's goals and activities for the coming year. For those members who didn't get to that meeting I'll quickly recap what I said.

The NPA ACT will:

- continue to lobby for the creation of a new national park for the ACT based on the preservation of the endangered Yellow Box-Red Gum grassy woodland ecosystem
  - be busy finalising a new “coffee table” book on Namadgi, updating and reprinting the “reptiles and frog” book and organising a reprint of our bird field guide
  - develop a considered response (‘position’) to the national campaign for tourist developments in national parks
  - develop proposals for walking tracks in nature parks
  - push for ranger staffing and other resources for reserves to be increased
  - push for an annual ‘State of the Park’ report for Namadgi.
- Many of these goals and activities will be overseen by either the reconvened environment sub-committee or the publications sub-committee.

As you can see there are some interesting times ahead and we are always looking for dedicated people to join these sub-committees.

Lastly, elsewhere in this issue, the editorial staff have asked for input on the format of the *Bulletin*. There have been some significant changes over the past couple of years and your views on these are keenly sought.



**Rod Griffiths**

# A report on the 2010 Namadgi National Park Plan of Management

A review of Namadgi's management plan had already commenced when the 2003 bushfires struck. With over 90 per cent of the park fire-affected the government took the very sensible view that it was best to wipe the slate clean and start again. Seven years later we finally have an official management plan.

As an organisation deeply concerned about the long-term management of Namadgi there are two things we should look at closely: the process that produced the management plan and the effectiveness of the plan itself. In terms of its process it is probably fair to say that the 2005 draft plan was a good indication of what park managers and local environmentalists wanted. Five years later, the process has clearly been found wanting.

## A flawed process

The first draft was released after over 18 months of community consultation, including workshops. Scientific data had been collected and sifted carefully and the plan had been aligned with other government documents such as the *'Shaping our Territory'* suite of papers released as a result of the bushfires. In 2007 the draft plan was referred to the Legislative Assembly and, in March 2008, the Assembly's Standing Committee on Planning and Environment agreed on its terms of reference for its inquiry into the plan. It released its findings in August 2008 and then the plan sat waiting for another two years.

One point about this process that is worth noting is that the management plan which the Assembly committee reviewed was not the publicly released draft plan of 2005 but a version prepared in 2007 that was not released to the public. So the Assembly committee was forced to hold public hearings on a document the public had not been able to read. Members of NPA ACT had to do some intense crystal ball gazing to imagine what the management plan might now be saying.

## Some wins; some losses

Nevertheless, we must have got something right because the committee's report recommended several significant changes we had asked for, including re-establishment of a joint management board; restrictions on horse camping near streams and huts; a review of com-

mercial operations in the park; and a restoration of a table restricting the size of events held in sections of the park—the infamous Schedule 3 in the 2005 version. The government accepted some—horses must be tethered 30m from huts and waterways—but rejected others, including the restriction on the size of events in certain areas.

The management plan then disappeared for another two years to finally be tabled in the Assembly and publicly released in September 2010.

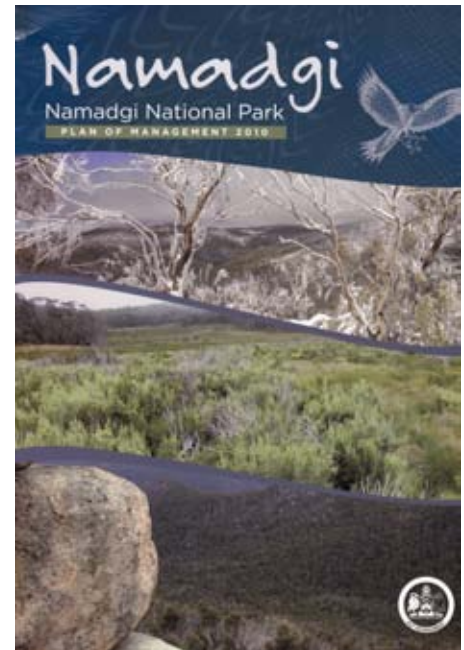
So the process has been deeply flawed both by the time taken to produce an official management plan and in the secrecy of the 2007 draft being used for the Legislative Assembly Committee's formal inquiry.

## Indecision and lack of commitment to conservation goals

None of this would matter much in the long run if we had an excellent management plan that would serve us for at least the next five to ten years but it is hard to get an accurate assessment of how the plan will operate. It has large slabs of indecisive text that point to aspirations, wishes, aims, and desires that are not translated into clear directions. Overall it lacks a firm commitment to policies that are crucial to the good management of the park, such as research and data collection. Yet it is very specific about some activities such as those related to the development of commercial tourism in the park. It retains its earlier emphasis on the conversion of Gudgenby Homestead into commercial tourist accommodation; closed management trails can be used for commercial activities such as outdoor education and adventure activities; and special access rights may be granted to commercial tourism operators with the consent of the Conservator.

## Large-scale competitive events to stay

NPA members will not be surprised that it retains the commitment to large-scale competitive events in the park. A modification to the 2007 version of the plan, Action 147, promises that a formal policy document will be developed within 12 months of the plan being released, to 'guide the assessment of applications for events'. Although there is no provision for public comment on the document, NPA will carefully



monitor its development and final form.

The plan has been improved in some areas. There is more emphasis early in the document on the significance of the conservation objectives of the park. The Actions are listed in an appendix and have each been given a priority. However, there is no formal assessment and reporting process and certainly no public reporting such as the annual 'State of the Park' report which NPA has been campaigning for.

## Sound management plan lacking

In short, a somewhat covert process has led to a document that attempts much but fails to establish a sound management plan that would serve both the public and park management for the immediate future. And this is the important part: Namadgi National Park's Plan of Management is in many respects a contract between the government and the public, covering the protection and enhancement of our most valuable asset. Instead it has been treated as a political football for over seven years. The challenge is not yet over to ensure this and other Territory management plans actually contribute to sound scientific management of, and reporting on, our natural resources.

**Christine Goonrey**

# What the ACT Budget needs is a “State of the Park Report”

Here is a trick question: *What did the ACT Government expect to get for the Budget funds it set aside for management of its parks and reserves in 2010–11?*

The answer is: ‘Customer satisfaction with the management of Nature Parks (Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and Namadgi)’. This is the only ‘accountability indicator’ set up in the Budget for the management of Namadgi National Park and Canberra’s nature reserves.

It is probably just as well that the government set such a vague indicator because the funds to manage Namadgi and CNP are fast disappearing. In 2009–10 the Land Management program of Territory and Municipal Services (TAMS) was allocated \$69.19 million. In 2010–11 funding was reduced to \$67.8 million and also managers have been directed to re-pay an ‘overspend’ from the previous year, rumoured to be about \$6 million, making a net allocation of around \$61 million.

## Parks and reserves deliver real socioeconomic benefits

NPA has consistently made the point that the ‘overspend’ is in fact an under-allocation. The program’s largest fixed cost is for staff. Like schools, hospitals, police stations and fire brigades, you can’t run parks and reserves without people to look after them. The fact is that our Parks and Reserves staff do actually provide services that are as essential as those of the health and justice systems. In Namadgi, their work in maintaining a pristine water catchment ensures the ACT has some of the cleanest water in Australia. Their maintenance of the ACT’s parks and reserves ensures recreation opportunities without which our citizens would incur much higher health costs; tourism and marketing values that contribute to our city’s economy; and a visual and spiritual delight that is priceless.

## Setting accountability/performance indicators

So, if the ACT Budget papers were to set reasonable accountability indicators what would they look like? What would we, as taxpayers, want to see for our money? We would probably want to know if weeds and feral pests were being tackled successfully; if the walking tracks were being maintained in a safe condition; if cultural sites were adequately preserved and protected; if vandalism was on the decrease; if illegal incursions into the water catchment were being reduced; and if community safety was being maintained. In short we would look for a ‘State of the Park’ report for both Namadgi and Canberra Nature Park. Yet the government has consistently said that it cannot afford to put aside the extra funds needed for a ‘State of the Park’ report; it prefers, it says, to spend what money it can on conservation activities rather than mere words.

However, we have to have appropriate accountability indicators in order to understand whether the money being spent is actually achieving conservation outcomes. A vague indicator such as satisfaction with management of the reserves tells managers very little. It is highly subjective and that reduces its usefulness. State of the Park indicators on the other hand should provide budget and on-the-ground managers, and the general public, with measurable information on the effectiveness of conservation approaches. It would be hoped that such information is already being gathered.

## The tools are available

The task is not difficult. As we heard at our June General Meeting, Roger Good and Graeme Worboys have developed a relatively simple, standardised system for assessing the health of water catchments in national parks, which has

been tested across Victoria, NSW and ACT. TAMS already has this report. They now have a model that can help them assess whether our park managers actually have enough resources to achieve the tasks they have been set. Now all we have to do is persuade the government to regularly report to us on the actual state of our parks and reserves—and on the adequacy of the funds it allocated for the task. That shouldn’t be too hard, should it?

## A chance to influence the next ACT Budget

In fact there is a good opportunity to pressure the government to do just that. The ACT Treasurer Katy Gallagher has asked for community input into the 2011–12 Budget by 17 December 2010. NPA members who want to contribute could make a submission asking for accountability indicators that make the management of national parks and reserves more transparent and accountable.

The Budget discussion paper is on the NPA website. Submissions can be made to

<[budgetconsultation@act.gov.au](mailto:budgetconsultation@act.gov.au)>  
or posted to:

ACT Budget Consultation  
Department of Treasury  
GPO Box 158  
Canberra ACT 2601

The NPA Environment sub-committee will be making a submission seeking both adequate funding for the management of the ACT’s natural resources and proper reporting on outcomes. This will also be placed on the website as soon as it is finished and may provide some ideas for members’ submissions. With some pressure from the public, the 2011–12 ACT Budget may be both more generous towards parks and reserves and more accountable than past Budgets.

**Christine Goonrey**

**Sunday 12 December 11:30am**

**NPA Christmas Party**

An event not to be missed.

At the Orroral Picnic Area (to the left of the Orroral Road just beyond the camping ground).

Bring your picnic lunch.

Nibbles, some drinks and Christmas Cake provided.

The final celebration of the association’s highly successful 50th anniversary year.

Entertainment with the usual fund-raising auction of members’ surplus items (bring your no-longer-needed bits and pieces).

Check *Burning Issues* for late information.



# The Glenburn complex ... restoration and beyond

The Glenburn complex is located in Kowen Forest to the east of Canberra and consists of some superb remnants of early European settlement in the Canberra–Queanbeyan area. The homestead itself consists of a pisé building and a slab building. The surrounding area includes the Colverwell graves, the Glenburn shearing shed, Colliers homestead, sheep yards, a hayshed remnant and other historic sites that together make up a whole European cultural history that can be told in this one valley. Significant pressure to restore these heritage buildings saw funding sought from the Federal Government in November 2009 for hut restoration. Once granted this opened up the opportunity to begin the restoration.

ACT Parks, Conservation and Lands decided to focus on the emergency stabilisation of the pisé and slab huts of Glenburn, which have been requiring urgent attention for some years. They were built over the period 1897–1901 and extreme care was needed to ensure their preservation.

Advice on the most suitable approach to the conservation of these buildings

*The pisé building (top right) and the slab building (below) of the Glenburn homestead. Both have been stabilised structurally. Photos Col McAlister*

was sought from ACT Heritage, a structural engineer, a materials conservator and builder Joel Dunn. Joel Dunn from Binutti Constructions had extensive experience in pisé buildings gained through his restoration of Rock Valley and Nil Desperandum homesteads.

The severe outward bulges on the pisé hut walls were slowly squeezed in over a number of months by dampening the walls and using a clinching system. Once walls were relatively vertical they were capped with concrete reinforced with steel rods. The major cracks in the pisé walls were then filled to prevent further erosion and destabilisation.

The severe sideways lean on the slab hut was also progressively rectified over a series of months using water and a pulley system. Significant rabbit damage under the hut led to two cubic metres of concrete being poured under the floor into the endless burrow systems, thus also serving as a footing. A metal frame



was erected inside the hut for further stabilisation.

This was a great foundation to initiating a process for the heritage conservation of the entire complex. A ‘Friends of Glenburn’ group has been established to really reinforce the importance of restoring these significant historical elements of early ACT and Queanbeyan European settlement.

**Louisa Roberts**

**ACT Parks, Conservation and Lands**



*The Friends of Glenburn group referred to in this article is an unincorporated body set up within the Parkcare framework, with support from members of NPA and the Kosciuszko Huts Association.*

*The ACT Government, and particularly the parks service, is to be commended for the conservation work being done on the Glenburn sites. This work follows on from research conducted by Colin McAlister and published as NPA Monograph ‘Twelve historic sites in the Glenburn and Burbong areas of the Kowen Forest, Australian Capital Territory’, November 2007. The monograph is now out of print, but consideration is being given to making it available in PDF format on the NPA website.*

*Colin McAlister is leading a walk to Glenburn on Sunday 13 March 2011. For details see the NPA Outings Program in this Bulletin.*

**Ed.**

# On safari in Timor Leste: solving some puzzles

Ten members of Canberra Friends of Dili spent two weeks in July 2010 exploring Timor Leste by 4WD. We were impressed by the potential for ecotourism, and have written this account of our trip hoping to intrigue potential visitors. But I have to admit to another purpose. Sources for background were not easy to find before we left, and writing this has helped to make more sense of the various landscapes we encountered during our trip.

Timor Leste is roughly a fifth the size of Tasmania with, at about one million people, twice the population. Landscapes vary dramatically. Village people belong to one of the many different regional groups, known in the past as kingdoms. They are fiercely independent, and resisted, first, the Portuguese (1511–1975), then the Japanese (1942–45) and finally the Indonesians (1975–99). The several commemorative sites that we visited—Balibo was only one—pay testimony to tragic episodes from these occupations and are the tip of the iceberg where the memories of the Timorese are concerned.

## Vegetation and agriculture

The first puzzle we — by which I mean my husband David and I — needed to crack concerned vegetation and local agriculture. On the second day of our visit, after a night in the market town of

Maliana, our three vehicles set off into the hills. We climbed up and up, between towering limestone cliffs, winding round a stunning mountainous complex dominated by Mount Loelako. Eventually we found ourselves on undulating uplands, some grass-covered, some with a scrubby vegetation, studded with isolated eucalypts and casuarinas. Villages, with their distinctive houses on stilts, with round, thatched roofs, sprawled over ridges and hillsides.

## Subsistence farming

Most Timorese live as subsistence farmers in the mountainous interior. But how do they survive in this unpromising-looking environment? Eventually we worked out we were driving through a landscape where most of the original tree cover had been removed, in part for shifting cultivation. We remembered the range of fruit and vegetables we had seen in Maliana market (squash, carrots, sweetpotato, greens and maize, for example), and the mandarin oranges and bananas for sale at the ubiquitous road-



Mountain village housing, Bobanaro Province.

side stalls. Then we noticed patches of terracing, and realised that behind the village housing were fruit trees and garden patches. The ubiquitous pigs, goats, chickens and dogs are all eaten. We noted a few dovecotes, and wondered if pigeons provided another source of food. Shrubs that regrow on fallowed clearings are harvested for firewood, the main source of cooking fuel.

As readers will be interested in Timor Leste's puzzling vegetation complexes, I will devote the next few paragraphs to describing them. On his return to Canberra, a member of our party, Stephen Utick, followed up the field notes he made during our trip and, with his kind permission, many of the botanical details that follow draw on his subsequent findings.

## Forests

The northern part of the country was never densely forested. It is typified by savanna vegetation. There is a distinct dry season (May–November) during which food may be short, and wildfire is a threat. However, semi-evergreen rainforest (less than one per cent of the land area) clings to protected valleys in the south of the country, reflecting higher rainfall. These forest fragments rank, in international terms, as critical/endangered. It was here that there was deliberate defoliation in places by the Indonesians hunting Fretilin independence fighters. Mundo Perdido ('Lost World'), a former guerrilla refuge, may become Timor Leste's second national park. It consists of forested, precipitous

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Mount Loelako.

## On safari in Timor Leste: solving some puzzles *(continued from page 6)*

limestone peaks in the heart of the country in Viqueque Province. The only national park so far is Nino Konis Santana, on the eastern tip of Timor Leste, declared in 2007 and set up with the assistance of the European Commission and (recently) NSW NPWS. It includes the undisturbed tropical forest of low-lying Jaco Island where some 25 rare and endangered bird species have been identified.

### Wallacea: a biogeographic meeting place

To make further sense of that scrubby landscape around Mount Loelako, we need to remind ourselves that Timor is part of the biogeographical zone of Wallacea. In his explorations between 1854 and 1862 in the eastern part of the then Dutch East Indies, Alfred Russel Wallace was astounded to discover a sharp division in the fauna of adjacent islands, those to the west and north having species of animals of Asian ancestry, those to the south and east having Australian fauna. Scientists subsequently identified a zone of transition, now known as Wallacea, in which species of animals and plants from Asia coexist with those from Australia. Timor Leste has both monkeys and the marsupial cuscus. Wallacean flora includes genera such as *Eucalyptus*, *Cassia* and *Casuarina*, with which our Australian party felt quite at home! Among the eucalypts is *Eucalyptus urophylla*, a species native to Indonesia and Timor. The sandalwood (*Santalum sp.*) that attracted the Portuguese to Timor 500 years ago has been reduced to a few solitary stands. I should also here mention Teak (*Tectona sp.*), endemic to the monsoon forests of South Asia, including Timor. It is prolific and we saw this often along the mountain roads.

### Diverse food and ornamental plants

When we eventually dropped south off the highlands, we entered secondary forest. It contains a range of tropical plants that have been introduced for food or other purposes. We noted coconuts, palm, breadfruit, mangoes, bananas, taro and a range of vegetable crops, all mixed



*Mundo Perdido, Viqueque Province.*

in with remnants of the original flora.

In and around the villages, Timor Leste's jumble of plants includes many that are familiar to us as ornamentals. Some are cultivars imported during the Portuguese era, such as oleander (*Nerium sp.*), *Ixora sp.*, the yellow flowered *Thevetia peruviana*, *Acalypha*, many species of *Hibiscus*, *Croton*, *Bougainvillea* vines, *Polyscias* and some roses. *Duranta sp.* (pigeonberry) has long been grown as a small hedge and is very common in the countryside. Poinsettia (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*), the red-flowering pot plant we see in southern Australia at Christmas, grows like a weed in Timorese rural villages. Unfortunately, this plant family has also contributed a serious weed that has taken over the Timorese coastline, the purple-leaved *Jatropha gossypifolia*. Another weed is the strange blue-flowered 'crown plant' *Calotropis gigantea*. A native of Asia, this can be found everywhere along the Timorese roads. Curiously, it has a link to Hinduism; it was sacred to the monkey god Hanuman and that may provide an explanation as to why this plant spread to the region at some time in the distant past. Other and more important trees of religious significance, closely associated with animist shamanic practices, are the banyan *Ficus benghalensis* and weeping fig *Ficus benjamina*.

Diverse species of mangrove grow along the coast. Littoral forest contains some important agricultural plants. In addition to the genera *Cocos* and *Pandanus*, a *Corypha* palm provides both building material and food.

*Corypha* palm fronds provide tough thatching for huts, the bark and wood are edible, and the flesh around the seed, *akaditu*, is thick, juicy and can be eaten. Enthusiastically, we tried the palm wine, *tuamutin*, made from its fermented flesh. It was not an experience we repeated.

### Coffee: a significant export

At first, we looked in vain for coffee, Timor Leste's only significant agricultural export.

On our third day, we turned inland again, climbing steeply between villages clinging to precipitous rock outcrops that disappeared into the mist. Here at last we saw clusters of red berries drooping from the branches of tall shrubs. Coffee shrubs usually form an understory to a canopy of an indigenous tree, the tall, nitrogen-fixing *Paraserianthes falcataria* (often commonly known as Albizia). This beautiful and striking tree sometimes stands alone, its horizontal branches reaching out gracefully from the upper part of its slender pale trunk. It was unfamiliar to us—another puzzle that we solved only after our return! The coffee harvest had been delayed by an unusually wet July. Timor Leste's Arabica coffee is of the highest quality. It is not understood why the trees, many as much as 80 years old, are still yielding. Twenty years is the norm elsewhere. A fungal disease, gall rust, has infected most trees. Both USAid and Oxfam are working with Cooperative Café Timor, which has 21 000 members, the former helping to raise nurseries of young plants, the latter assisting producers to diversify into other cash crops. We bought roasted coffee beans to bring home from the cooperative factory in Dili and noticed that the price charged by Oxfam in Canberra for Timor Leste coffee was six times as much.

Unexpectedly, we found that there are only a few fishing villages, relying on locally built, small outrigger canoes. Where rivers have deposited alluvial flats near their mouths or deltas, there are extensive rice paddies. Why, we wondered, were there often seemingly abandoned paddies? Later, a government

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## On safari in Timor Leste: solving some puzzles *(continued from page 7)*

official told us that this is because the government is importing rice and selling it at a subsidised price.

### Custom and craft

Yet another question that intrigued us concerned the cemeteries. Buffalo horns and animal skulls form graveside markers at the head of some graves, while others have crosses. Conversions to Roman Catholicism accelerated after 1975, as the church was a source of support for the resistance. Eighty per cent of Timor Leste's people now declare themselves as Roman Catholic. But

animist beliefs persist. When one of our drivers learnt that a monkey had jumped on me when I was asleep in a remote mountain dormitory one night, his immediate reaction was: 'Oh! A spirit!'

Patterns of monkeys and other animals sometimes feature in the woven cloth that we saw for sale in many village markets. Women use handspun thread from locally grown cotton to weave this cloth, which is known as *tais*. Tais are intricately patterned with cotton thread coloured with vegetable (and, these days, some synthetic) dyes, and are worn on formal occasions. Patterns are unique to geographical areas. They are marketed overseas by the Alola Foundation through fair trade organisations.



*Graves, Tutuala Village*

We bought one from a woman who we spotted weaving behind her house. They use backstrap looms, i.e. they sit on the ground, facing the loom frame, their back supported by a shaped piece of wood attached to the loom with cords. The National Gallery of Australia owns a 6th century bronze from Flores, Indonesia, known as *The Bronze Weaver*. It is a model of a woman using a backstrap loom.

### Geology

As another souvenir, we also brought back a little bag of stones collected from various places. We are still trying to grasp the geology of Timor, which is as



complex as the botany. The island forms the lip of the Australian plate where it collides with the Indonesian volcanic arc, known as the Banda Arc. This is a dramatic edge to the Australian continent, as the strait north of Dili, 23km wide, facing the island of Ata'uru, is 3km deep. A variety of material

*A weaver of tais, using her backstrap loom, Suai.*

from the Banda Arc, known as the Banda Terrane, has been thrust south over the Australian plate, some of it folded into huge anticlines, faulted, then partially stripped off by erosion. Along the northern coast, for example near Timor Leste's second largest town, Baucau, limestone has been uplifted in a series of high terraces. Near here, I found a fascinating exposure of rock only a few metres above sea level comprising a mixture of shell, rock fragments and coral fragments consolidated in a clay matrix.

Here was evidence that the entire island of Timor is being uplifted at a rapid rate. We were also struck by the braided rivers, familiar to us from the south island of New Zealand. This is no coincidence. Both islands are long and narrow, with high mountains. River profiles are therefore short and steep. Rivers erode powerfully and deposit coarse gravel in their lower courses. In several riverbeds we saw men shovelling gravel into trucks to use as building material— an illegal activity, we were told, but ignored by the authorities.

### A long path to development

As tourists, we often felt deeply uncomfortable about the disparity between our lifestyle and that of the cheerful schoolchildren and of the shy women peeping from dark doorways. Schoolgirls have little to smile about where their future is concerned. Women currently have seven to eight children each, according to AusAID's *Australia-Timor-Leste Country Strategy 2009-2014*. A census was being carried out while we were there. In fact, we missed being counted by one day! We noticed with some concern the widespread presence of groups of young men hanging around in, for example, street markets. The rate of youth unemployment is said to be around 40 per cent, and it is higher for women than men. Timor Leste is one of the world's poorest countries, ranking 162nd

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## On safari in Timor Leste: solving some puzzles *(continued from page 8)*

out of 182 countries in the UN Human Development Index, according to the AusAID strategy document. Investment from the sovereign fund deriving from oil and gas revenues is being carefully husbanded with Norwegian advice, and interest from it currently provides most of the government's operating resources. We noted many new village schools and health clinics throughout our trip.

### Bushwalking and eco-tourism attractions

We were tantalised, as would be any bushwalkers and pony-trekkers, by the extensive mountain ridges that extend far beyond the 4WD roads. At roadside markets we saw men loading up their Timor ponies to set off home to villages over the skyline. It seems that there is a network of tracks and paths to such remote villages, which are literally 'off the beaten track' for tourists.

Although we did little exploration on foot, EcoDiscovery, a locally-owned company, will tailor its offerings to suit demand ([www.ecodiscovery-easttimor.com](http://www.ecodiscovery-easttimor.com)). We found their driver-guides excellent. There is much to gain from exploring Timor Leste with an English-speaking guide with invaluable local knowledge—such as where to obtain petrol and spare parts!

As far as security is concerned, AusAID recognises that there are several risks that could threaten social stability, as in any post-conflict society. Whether in Dili or upcountry, we encountered no obvious tensions. Military police from

several countries under the UN badge are present in Dili and other large settlements.

Tourism brings both threats and opportunities to a nation such as Timor Leste, but tourists like ourselves stand to gain much, particularly in acquiring a more sensitive understanding of the issues facing such a country. This experience opened up new geographic vistas for us, but left us querying our responsibilities. Furthermore, we are aware that many Australians feel that our nation has a lot to answer for where Timor Leste is concerned.

NPA members considering a visit to Timor Leste are welcome to contact Canberra Friends of Dili for further information: [altamr@bigpond.com](mailto:altamr@bigpond.com).

**Elizabeth Kenworthy Teather**  
*Photographs provided by the author*



*Timor ponies, Aileu market.*

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*NB the two books above are by professional photographers, and precede the civil unrest of 2005–06.*

For Timor Leste coffee  
See an up-to-date article by Matt Crook, 'Timor Leste's farmers start again', *Guardian Weekly*, 12.06.09, p.44.

For geology  
Keep, M. and D.W. Haig, 'Deformation and exhumation in Timor: Distinct stages of a young orogeny', *Tectonophysics* 483, pp.93–111, 2010. (I am grateful to Clive Collins for this reference.)

For Wallacea  
This is a complex subject.  
An excellent introductory site is <http://www.starfish.ch/dive/Wallacea.html>.



*River crossing near Soibada*

## Geotanka

walking past  
a pile of rocks glinting  
in morning sunlight  
only I know it's calc-silicate  
hornfels of Ordovician age

dark hidden  
outcrop by the lake—  
Silurian limestone—  
lingering remnant  
of the Limestone Plains

imprint  
of brachiopods  
in the mudstone  
under our house  
an ancient seabed

Monga  
rainforest gully—  
plumwood trees  
growing out of treeferns—  
remnant of Gondwanaland

landscape eroded  
down for twenty million years ...  
tired rivers  
in their valleys ... Woden  
Molonglo ... Murrumbidgee

Lake George—  
basin since the Miocene—  
is that  
eight million years  
since time began here?

moonwashed night  
on a dry lake bed  
looking  
to distant hills  
sense of the eternal

Gerry Jacobson

*(First published in 'Science Made  
Marvellous', Poets Union, 2010)*

# An afternoon stroll up Mount Nungar



Sunday 29 August was one of those magnificent winter bushwalking days. Max Lawrence had scheduled a walk to Mt Nungar. With a bit of luck, he said, there might be some snow up there. I had climbed it several times back in the '90s and reckon its summit offers some of the best 360 degree views of our wilderness going, taking in much of both Kosciuszko and Namadgi National Parks. And the snow falls the previous week suggested to me that there would indeed be some snow to see— so much so that I brought out my museum piece Yeti snow shoes from under the house.

## A hundred miles from home

Mt Nungar is about 70 km from the Kambah Village car park as the crow flies, but the rugged high country of Namadgi National Park means a scenic drive around it via Adaminaby to get there. It rises prominently from the south-eastern edge of the Tantangara Plain just south of Tantangara Dam in the northern end of Kosciuszko National Park. The summit is 1 710 metres asl— or about 400 metres above the road in to the dam. It is not a hard climb through open snow gum scrub— just think of it as climbing Mount Taylor a couple of times, but maybe not as steep. The 2003 fires left Mt Nungar alone and it probably hasn't been burnt at all for 40 or so years.

## Memories of an earlier visit

Thirteen of us met at the Kambah Village to drive the two-hour trip to the beginning of our walk. We took three four-wheel drives and, for passenger comfort's sake, Adrienne Nicholson took her two-wheel drive Toyota Corolla wagon. I travelled with Max in his

Holden Jackaroo turbo diesel 4WD. He wisely wanted us to convoy as he thought there would be snow on the Tantangara Road and, in those conditions, it can be quite a challenge to climb the first two or three kilometres in a two-wheel drive. Indeed, Max led this walk back in maybe 1998 in similar, but cooler, conditions— we had two 4WDs then, plus my Holden Camira. We got in and out OK then and my wheel chains remained in the back of the car ... So I couldn't wait to see if the magic of those scenes from Mt Nungar, still very fresh in my memory, would be repeated. With climate change, or is it climate chaos, in full swing I did not think there would be many more such opportunities.

## Disaster hits our leader

All was going well, until about a third of the way on the Boboyan Road near Brayshaws Hut, when the turbo in Max's engine failed big time. What a smoke screen we laid!! Initially, we thought it was a ploy to lose the others in our convoy ... And we were way out of mobile phone range. Fortunately, an ACT Park Ranger— the very helpful Louisa— whom many knew [and who coincidentally is also the author of the Glenburn article in this *Bulletin*. Ed.] came along on a routine patrol and she organised an NRMA Road Service truck to come to get Max and his car back home to Canberra. All of which happened with remarkable speed and has ended happily. At the time, Max was deeply concerned that most of those who had joined him would miss a great opportunity to see much of our wilderness in its winter clothes. After a little caucusing at Brayshaws, he asked me to lead the walk.

*(continued on page 11)*

# A walk with a kinky name

'The Drip'. What an eccentric name for a bushwalking destination. So, intrigued, I decided to drive 50km north of Mudgee (NSW) to see this curiosity for myself.

From a brochure I knew the basics of the walk. It's short, just 3km return, and runs alongside the Goulburn River. And the origin of its kinky name? At the end of the walk, the brochure told me, an overhanging cliff face drips 'clear spring water' into the river, which flows over a rock platform at the base of the cliff.

The walk begins at The Drip picnic area off the Cassilis road, 10km past the village of Ulan. The brochure says that walkers will find that the 'river meanders through spectacular gorges and grassy banks', which is fair enough. Further, 'The sandstone cliffs are honeycombed

with caves and shelter weeping ferns and bottlebrushes fed by springs through cracks and crevices'.

I followed the track without much effort although soon after the start a swollen creek forced me to discard boots and socks and tiptoe across, grimacing in the icy water. The river, little more than a creek itself, flowed cheerfully after rain and was my companion throughout. There was one tricky part on the track and had I slipped there I would have found myself deposited in the Goulburn's sparkling waters.

I passed a couple of family groups on the way to The Drip and on that admittedly meagre evidence concluded that the trail was popular.

The track ends where the river swirls

among boulders near the imposing cliff face, but to my chagrin there was no drip of any description. I thought this odd given that the drips are said to come from 'clear spring water'.

That was OK though. It was an enjoyable excursion for all that and made better still when on my return I drove a short distance to visit a nearby Aboriginal art site known as 'Hands on rock'. There's a short bush track here leading up to reddish hand outlines resembling stencils on a rock face. These are not as imposing as others I have seen, but combine both walks and you have an outing that justifies a 100km return trip (from Mudgee, that is).

**Graeme Barrow**

## An afternoon stroll up Mount Nungar *(continued from page 10)*

### A tricky drive through the drifts

It was obvious once we left Adaminaby that the Tantangara Road would indeed have snow on it. Many shady places were white with remnant snow drifts from the near blizzard conditions the previous week. We were left in no doubt as we turned onto the Tantangara Road—it was indeed a snow-covered muddy road. The drivers took the precaution of walking several hundred metres along the road to a couple of known hard spots—it looked doable. Adrienne was willing to give it a go—after all there were sufficient numbers and she would let us push her around this time if needs be! So by having Adrienne's Toyota Corolla follow the tracks of the two four-wheel drives—more SUVs really—we all got there. I must say there were several times during those first five kilometres where I thought the snow was sufficiently deep and chaotic enough to put an end to Adrienne's progress. But no—no matter where we led her—there she was, clearly visible in our mirrors. I think that silver Toyota Corolla Wagon now is well and truly eligible to sit next to Adrienne's famous red Mazda 808 wagon as a signal that the NPA is here! It was a slow but rather exciting drive to our walk starting point as we slipped and slid every now and then!! And so beautiful in the snow which was between 10–30 cm deep in places.

I was so glad I brought my snow shoes. So, I think, were the others, who hadn't ... as many followed my tracks up the mountain through snow which was getting more general and deeper the

higher we climbed. We stopped for lunch at a little grassy patch among the snow gums a bit less than half way up. It was nice there in the sun, surrounded by trees—some robins were to be seen, snowy views were visible to the north west—really very pleasant.



*From the top of Mt Nungar looking north between Tantangara Dam and the Brindabella Range. The ACT's border peaks line up along the skyline. Photos provided by Steve Hill.*

### Grand views from the summit

But no, the evil leader (me) insisted we continue and we reached the 1710 metre summit in time for afternoon tea. It wasn't especially cold—very little wind and no cloud except in the far west. The 360 degree views of snow-covered mountains and plains were simply awesome. I never thought I'd see it again like that. There were the Snowy Mountains to the south-west with a prominent bright white Jugungal and Table Top Mountain; a snow-covered Mt Tantangara (itself a great venue for a scenic walk) to the west of Blackfellows Hill, the Bogong Peaks to the distant north; and the Brindabellas, including my favourites, Mt Morgan and Mt Gingera, to the east—plus much more. Indeed, there seemed some

incredulity when I pointed out the top of Mount Coree far distant to the north.

We saw some interesting footprints which suggested a fox or dingo stalking a wallaby. Coming down was quicker—despite a couple of tender knees on the part of one or two of us. Driving back to the Snowy Mountains Highway was less exciting, as the relatively warm day had melted some of the snow on the road. We were happy that the café in Adaminaby was open late enough to receive a carefully planned economic stimulus from us. I'm told their coffee ain't bad and the homemade cakes were good.

Despite Max's vehicular misfortune—it was one of those magic days.

**Steve Hill**

## Birds in our backyard

September 20th 2010, almost the equinox but the first snakes of the season have been spotted out and about in the ACT and the first chicks have fledged in our backyard.

A pair of spotted pardalotes had excavated a tunnel between rocks in a dry stone retaining wall in our backyard several years ago but chose other real estate in between, to our great sorrow. This year, however, we recognised their furtive comings and goings in a brief warm spell in August, digging a new

burrow in the stone wall and taking in nesting material. Then the frosts returned, rain poured down, nearly double our monthly average, and saturated the soil. We were sure they would have abandoned the nest.

A few days ago, to our delight, we heard a high-pitched squeaking, then saw an adult zooming into the burrow, food in beak.

The weather in Canberra on this Sunday was warm with blue skies. The ants were massing at every high point for a grand emigration. Sonja had observed in a nearby tree a fledgling pardalote being coaxed by a parent into flying to a higher tree, which it finally did. She then noticed two, small, moving objects near the pardalote tunnel entrance. I grabbed my camera and

watched as one by one two more chicks appeared at the entrance and, with much encouragement from a watchful parent, made their first, short, wobbled flight to a nearby callistemon. There they stretched their wings, took a breath, had a mouthful of fast-food from a doting parent and made the long, unsteady flight across our backyard to a scribbly gum (*Eucalyptus rossii*) in our front yard and then off to explore the wide world.

What a wonderful day!

**Kevin McCue**  
21 September 2010



## Record of a bushwalk; Perisher Range, 25 July 2010

Participants: Brian Slee (leader), Mike Bremers, Allen Bills, Esther Gallant, Margaret Power, Kerrie Tomkins

Weather: Mild temperatures, mostly blue skies, occasional breeze

### Leader's report:

For a second time, an introductory snowshoe walk to Pretty Point was thwarted by lack of snow. The substitute walk, on the Perisher Range, was of a more difficult grade, and with snow

softer than expected. Some participants were much fatigued by the exercise.

We met at a new place, Calwell Shops, from where we departed in two white Subarus at 6:45am. After stopping at Dainers Gap (no snow), we proceeded to Perisher, arriving 9:15am. One idea was to take the chairlift and walk from the top of Perisher Range but the service was not available before 10:30am. Instead, at Kerrie's suggestion, we took the train to Blue Cow.

After donning snowshoes at Blue Cow station we headed toward Mount Blue Cow, at the base of which we picked up a groomed trail heading south-west. Most ski slopes down to Guthega were closed due to poor snow. Yet we had a beautiful view of the snow-covered Guthega Ridge as we descended to the bridge over Blue Cow Creek, where we had elevenses. Heading up another creek the snow became softer

and, once we crossed at a bridge, it became a real plod. Following Mike's imprint eased the effort. We climbed a ridge and at 12:30pm found a delightful lunch spot amid trees and overlooking valleys in two directions.

After the break, and as we contoured south in firmer snow around Mt Perisher, we encountered numerous coloured Snow Gums. We were having a lovely afternoon in an area in which none of us had been before. The descent to Perisher Gap, in crunchy-crystal snow, was exhilarating. It was then a 2km walk along slushy Kosciuszko Road to the cars, arriving 3:10pm.

The return to Canberra involved the usual stop in Jindabyne (at remodelled Sundance) and after a slow procession from Berridale to Cooma, the traffic picked up and we were back in Canberra about 6:15pm.

Early season snow walks from Dainers Gap seem impractical. However, south of there, the Skitube to Blue Cow offers unforeseen snowshoeing opportunities on Perisher Range.

**Brian Slee**

*Margaret Power enjoys the snow and the weather.*  
Photo Brian Slee



# The Darling River Run: car camping in the outback of NSW, 25 July to 20 August 2010



Due to the good rains enjoyed by the eastern states in the past two years and, in particular, the floods in south-western Queensland in February, the Darling River basin has flourished, so we nominated for Di Thompson's 'History and Big Rivers' trip advertised in the March *Bulletin*. Aside from natural history, our intention was to learn more about the cultural and social history of the Indigenous peoples and the impact of the colonial exploration and settlement.

The party assembled at Narrandera Tourist and Information Centre on Sunday 25 August. Present were Di Thompson (leader) and Gary Thompson, Deidre Shaw, Pete and Annie Tedder. Annette and Mike Smith and Nancy Smales joined us at Broken Hill. The journey took us 27 days and 5 043km. Frequent amendments had to be made to the plan when unsealed roads were closed by shire authorities. During the journey, we visited or camped in the following national parks: Yanga, Kinchega, Mutawintji, Sturt, Paroo–Darling, Gundabooka and an as yet unnamed park near Narrandera aimed at conserving the stands of River

Red Gum along the Murray–Murrumbidgee drainage system.

At Narrandera, our proposed campsite was dank and damp due to rain, and the roads distinctly greasy, so we stayed in the local caravan park and the following day, set out to complete the Forest Drive of about 20–25km. The poor road conditions forced us to shorten our recce and we were disappointed to observe that unrestricted vehicular access had badly damaged the area. Multiple tracks criss-crossed the river flats, and abundant litter and desecration of cultural sites were seen.

## Yanga and Kinchega NPs

On 27 July, we drove to Wentworth, stopping for lunch at the newly gazetted Yanga NP on the eastern side of Balranald. An excellent discovery centre displays the history of the region, including stories from the Aboriginal and European occupants. This park is worth more investigation as it contains the junction of the Murrumbidgee and Lachlan rivers.

After an overnight stop at Wentworth, at the junction of the Darling and Murray Rivers (where Charles Sturt was the first European visitor) we arrived at Kinchega NP on 29 July. The unsealed Pooncarie road was closed due to rain, forcing us to



### Key to map

1. Culgoa National Park
2. Gundabooka NP
3. Kinchega NP
4. Mt Grenfell Historic Site
5. Mungo NP
6. Mutawintji Historic Site
7. Mutawintji NP
8. Paroo–Darling NP and SCA
9. Sturt NP
10. Willandra NP
11. Yanga NP

travel via Broken Hill, but we did have the consolation of lunching at the historic Maidens Hotel in Menindee. The renovated shearers quarters is a superb and comfortable base from which to explore this most interesting park, and at a reasonable price. Other members of the party easily found camping sites around Cawndilla Lake but the Riverside and Emu drives remained closed. The Menindee Lakes are filling and seemed almost at maximum capacity.

Kinchega NP was formed when the cattle lease of the station ran out in 1967. There is much to see and do: the mighty Darling, now controlled by the Menindee Lakes Storage System; the wreck of the paddle steamer *Providence*; the modern shearing shed which, at its peak use, needed accommodation for 40 shearers; and the ruins of the homestead. An interpretive walk around the homestead told us of how the inhabitants lived. When the Darling was flowing, the paddle steamers loaded the wool from the nearby billabong. In November 1862, six lives were lost when the boiler of the *Providence*, which was bound for Goolwa from Bourke towing a barge loaded with wool, blew up. The Kinchega cemetery contains the unmarked graves of those who had perished. Burke and Wills visited the station in 1860 and recruited two men from the staff as replacements. One of these was the station manager, William Wright who, as third in command of the expedition, contracted to meet the returning party at Cooper Creek, and was blamed in colonial Victoria for the tragedy that followed.

We left Kinchega with regret on 2 August, feeling that a lot more could be done and drove to Mutawintji NP for three days camping. The unsealed road to the park was in good condition and

(continued page 14)

## The Darling River Run: car camping in outback NSW *(continued from page 13)*



*Gerald Quayle guided the group around Aboriginal sites in Mutawintji National Park. This stone is one of many with pecked images.*

we arrived to erect the tent alongside the flowing creek. Families of fussy Apostle Birds chattered around us and fought over scraps.

### **Mutawintji NP**

Gerald Quayle, a member of the Paakantji people, whose country extended along the Paaka, or Darling River, from Wentworth to Bourke met us the following morning and for 4 hours, guided us around the rock peckings and ochre stencils of the historic site. Aboriginal people have been using the food and permanent water of the area for thousands of years. It was the place where initiations, rainmaking and other ceremonies were held and, in good seasons, over 1 000 people would gather. Such is the importance of the site to the Paakantji people that they blockaded the area in 1993, and the site was the first area recognised by the NSW Government as being of vital Aboriginal significance.

Should anyone visit Mutawintji NP, I would advise that they walk the Homestead Loop and the Gorge Walk, which we completed on 5 and 6 August. Both tracks are well signed and use natural routes such as creeks and gorges to introduce the walker to the deeply dissected and confused topography. The view eastwards from the bare ridge tops on the Homestead Loop is superb, made even better by the soaring Wedge-tailed eagles, and glimpses of Major Mitchell cockatoos. Each walk can be completed in a longish half day.

### **Sturt NP**

From the 7–11 August, we were located in Sturt NP, staying in the comforts of Mt Wood Homestead. Sturt NP was the furthest from home that we were to travel on this trip. The highway north has unsealed sections and only Packsaddle, a lonely roadhouse selling the minimum needs of an outback traveller (petrol \$1.65 per litre), and the ghost town of Milparinka, punctuated the journey before we arrived at Tibooburra. The friendly lass behind the bar at Packsaddle warned us of a big pool across the road a few kilometres north: ‘Just stick to the centre and go through at a steady speed’ was her advice. Nan Smales did not hear this advice and, on viewing the pool, decided to divert to the shoulders. We arrived to find her well and truly bogged so we had to jack up the car, line the ruts with stones conveniently strewn nearby to get her little Corolla back on the crown.

Milparinka is only two kilometres off the highway and is a heritage precinct. The traveller can use the clean public facilities provided and browse the informative displays in the well-kept, clean, colonial sandstone court house, police station, cells and school. But the pub is shut, and the population has dwindled to two. Petrol is no longer served. It was late afternoon and we had to resupply in Tibooburra and rejoin the party at Mt Wood Station so we left this historic town intending to return on the

way south. We did not stay long in Tibooburra, just long enough to buy fresh food. The supermarket/petrol station is stocked with the necessities, and we left quickly to drive the 27km to Sturt NP and Mt Wood Station. We were met by Ingrid, the area manager, and given a brief on what roads were open. Our room was in the cavernous 1897 stone homestead, with high ceilings and large verandas filled with birdsong from the abundant greenery; we shared the communal kitchen.

The park is huge, so huge in fact that it is best seen by self-guided car trips. It covers 340 000 hectares of semi-desert and is essentially rolling downs covered with low herbage grading to red soil gibber plains and sandhills in the west. During our five day stay, we drove along the interesting Gorge and Jump Up loops, visited Olive Downs Homestead and the excellent outdoors Pastoral Museum. The bird life was abundant and a constant talking point. The brave amongst us drove the 320km day trip to Cameron Corner. As good information about the 405km of unsealed road from Tibooburra to Bourke was not available, we abandoned the plan to drive from Bourke to Wilcannia. Instead, we drove to Lake Peery out of White Cliffs in the Paroo–Darling NP, and this meant returning to Broken Hill.

### **Paroo–Darling NP**

On the way south on 12 August, we remedied the haste with which we left Milparinka and took the time to visit Depot Glen, Charles Sturt’s camp on his third expedition. In 1845, he was forced to base up for months at the glen during a severe drought. The camp is about 15km from Milparinka on an unsealed road. It is a historic site from which Sturt tried to find further evidence of the fabled ‘inland sea’. It would have provided adequate shade, and there is a deepish billabong at the base of a rock scarp. Poole’s grave is nearby and blue eremophila were flowering on the shale slopes at the back of the glen.

Lake Peery is located in the north-western section of the Paroo–Darling NP and is accessed via Wilcannia and White Cliffs. With its beautiful colonial buildings, majestic River Red gums lining the Darling flowing deep and strong, and a marvellous riverside location for a caravan park, Wilcannia’s potential is obvious. Sadly, the barred and shuttered main street, decayed and burnt-out buildings, the litter and small

*(continued next page)*

## The Darling River Run: car camping in outback NSW *(continued from page 14)*

groups of listless inhabitants were all a depressing experience and we left as soon as we could after buying very expensive petrol.

There is no official campsite in this section of the Paroo–Darling NP, so we carefully chose a suitable site for minimum impact and set up our tents before we scattered on our various walking, photographing and birding diversions. Set in semi-arid country, Lake Peery is surrounded by red soil and gibber plain. The lake spread out before our campsite and, that night, we were joined by Richard and Fiona from Mildura but the cold westerly sent us all to bed early. During the day, there had been some discussion as to our future plans and in view of the roads along the Darling being closed, most of us felt that the time had come to go home.

### White Cliffs

The following morning Diedre, the Thompsons and finally, the Smiths, struck their tents and trailers, packed their vehicles and with feeling, said goodbye, leaving Ann and I rather lonely and unsure but not yet ready to end the journey. Quickly, we decided to overnight in White Cliffs, then drive to Bourke on 15 August. Our intention was to explore the town, considered so representative of the Australian outback, and then camp for a few days in Gundabooka NP.

White Cliffs is worth visiting, if only to wonder at why we value so highly the beautiful opal with no industrial or commercial value other than as an adornment, and to admire the fortitude of the original diggers, chancing their luck with no permanent water and only a shovel and spade. The light is superb for photography, and the stark and savaged diggings add a grim, lonely air to the town. We splashed out and spent a comfortable night many metres underground in the Underground Motel. It's a weird feeling. White Cliffs is remarkable, but we left it nevertheless the following day, 15 August, without any intention to return. Making good time along the excellent Barrier Highway and then the Kidman Way from Cobar, we arrived in Bourke by late afternoon the same day.

### Bourke

Bourke proclaims its heroes on stone plinths in the green and shady Central Park: Henry Lawson who spent



*The author and friend at Wentworth, NSW*

10 years here, C.E.W. Bean who spent a similar time in the early 1900s, Harry (the 'Breaker') Morant, who practised his horse skills on the surrounding cattle stations (1895), and Will H. Olgilvie, poet, 1869–1963, whose composition 'Back o' Bourke' has given Australians an expression which is now part of our language. And a modern day hero—Fred Hollows—is buried in the cemetery. But, the business district along Mitchell St has fine buildings and all the important services, Bourke is not a modern town in appearance. Large trees have been planted, but empty buildings and vacant lots in the immediate vicinity of the business district speak of a lack of steady investment. That night, heavy trucks thundered through the town on the way to Queensland and the Bowling Club was full of tourists. The following morning, 16 August, we saw the Back O Bourke Exhibition situated in new buildings alongside a billabong on the edge of town. We can recommend a visit. Should any reader visit Bourke, and is prepared to camp, we suggest you stay at Kidman Camp, in North Bourke right on the Darling which, when we were there, looked splendid with lots of flowing water.

### Gundabooka NP

At the National Parks and Wildlife Service Office we booked three nights at the Shearers Quarters, on the old 'Belah' property at a very acceptable tariff. Several other options for camping or accommodation are available. The unsealed Bourke–Louth Road along the

River had not been interdicted by the rains, but from Louth through to Wilcannia the road remained closed. Mount Gundabooka (495m) erupts from the plain and dominates the landscape. On top we lunched amongst the cypress pines to see the floodplain extend westwards before us. Our field of view was so extensive—over 180 degrees—that I claimed to see the curvature of the earth, although Annie denied this. Two pairs of Wedge-tailed eagles soared beneath us, the rich ochre colour of the steep scarp contrasted with the soft colours of the grasslands and the grey-green of the Mulga. The following day, 18 August, we drove to the Mulgowan Art Site. A well-made track guides you to the viewing platform in about 15 minutes, and the day can be completed by walking up the beautiful creek, flowing in a shallow gorge, NNW towards the Gundabooka Range. We would have stayed longer but rain was predicted and clouds began forming. It rained lightly as we reached the car. That night, the rain increased and thoughts of an extra day were discarded. When a particularly heavy burst of rain came during dinner, we began wondering whether we would get out the following morning.

### Home, beside the strongly flowing Lachlan

Up at dawn, my first action was to check the improvised rain gauge: it showed 3–5mm overnight. I jumped in the car and cautiously drove around to find out the condition of the roads and was relieved to see that, with care, there should be no problem. We wasted no time to get moving and left Gundabooka (19 August) knowing that we wanted to come back. We sped down the Mitchell Highway and then the Newell to overnight at Forbes on the Lachlan, where we dined that night at the heritage Vandenberg Hotel, feeling warm and content that we had had a most satisfying and informative journey. We came home the following day and chose the Lachlan Valley Way as the appropriate route. At one point, we stopped and walked the few metres to the banks to check on the Lachlan. Not to be outdone, the river was flowing strongly.

**Peter Tedder**

*(Photographs provided by the author)*

# Association notes



## Your *Bulletin*— where to go from here?

Colour or black and white?

Hard copy or on line?

Your NPA *Bulletin* has evolved to what it is now from primitive beginnings 50 years ago. The most recent changes have involved the adoption of colour printing, starting with a colour cover at the beginning of 2008. There were eight such editions throughout 2008 and 2009.

This year we went a step further in printing the celebratory March 50th Anniversary edition in full colour throughout. Our committee thought that the result was so splendid that it decided to also produce the remaining three 2010 editions— of which this is the third and final one— in full colour.

However, the committee was also very conscious of the extra cost this entailed, and wanted to be assured that this represented value for money and an efficient and appropriate use of the association's funds. So it deferred deciding on whether to continue colour *Bulletins* beyond our Anniversary Year.

The time for decision is now upon us. There are at least a couple of choices available, including:

- continuing the 2010 practice of full colour throughout
- going back to colour covers with black and white insides.

In this day and age there is also the

option of producing an online version of the *Bulletin*, which could either replace or supplement in various ways the existing hard-copy version available to all members. To some degree we have already stepped in this direction with our monthly emailed *Burning Issues* to online members, and with our wonderful website <[www.npaact.org.au](http://www.npaact.org.au)>. If you have preferences on the way to go from here, please let the committee know what they are.

If you have ideas about what you would like to see in your *Bulletin*, please let's hear them too.

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**Editor**

## Welcome to two new committee members

At the election of the NPA management committee at the Annual General Meeting in August two 'ordinary committee member' positions remained unfilled, as indeed did the position of Vice President. While the association has some difficulty in accepting that indeed any of its members are 'ordinary', provision does exist in the NPA's constitution for the elected committee to

fill such vacancies for the period until the next AGM by appointing willing volunteers from the membership.

This year we have been very fortunate in having two such willing volunteers step into the breach. They are George Heinsohn and Mike Huson.

Welcome to you both!

## NPA ACT's Art Week at Gudgenby Cottage

The photographs in the montage on the facing page were taken by Kevin McCue, Esther Gallant and Adrienne Nicholson.

Various association members stayed at the cottage for a few days, or for the whole week, in September–October. All sorts of interests were undertaken; there was even occasion to hold a meeting of the publications sub-committee at the cottage!

The longer days at this time of year were more conducive to being out and about than was the case for our Art Week last year (May). It is therefore planned that we will apply for our Art Week to be held at Gudgenby Cottage around this same time next year. That is, keep this in mind if you think you would like to be part of this stimulating and entertaining initiative next spring (it is at the time of starting daylight saving!).

**Adrienne Nicholson**

## Gininderra Falls should be reopened

In mid October I was privileged to view the closed Ginninderra Falls as part of a group hearing about waterway and other issues in the west Belconnen area. After a wet winter and spring the upper falls provided a grand spectacle with many hundreds of litres of water belting down the falls every minute.

It was a surprise to find that the falls, which are just over the ACT border, have been closed for seven years because of insurance issues that forced the owners to shut the gates. The year before this occurred, 13 000 visitors had seen the falls and walked the tracks, including those down to the stunning lower falls near the Murrumbidgee River.

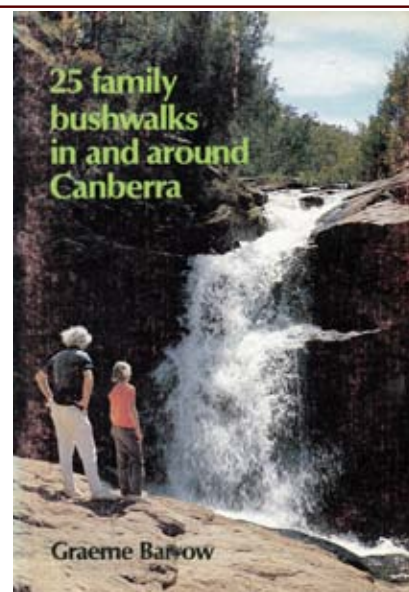
It was suggested that the ACT and NSW governments, the Yass Valley Council, property owners and community groups should get together to see how this natural spectacle could be reopened to the public, and the environs

protected from development. Already an intrusive house has been built behind the upper falls and can be seen by anyone looking at them.

Ginninderra Falls and the timbered gorge through which Ginninderra Creek runs are natural marvels that demand protection. Could the ACT Government grasp this cross-border nettle, display initiative and bring all the stakeholders together to achieve a satisfactory outcome? I have written to both governments and the Yass Valley Council on this issue and await their replies with considerable interest.

**Graeme Barrow**

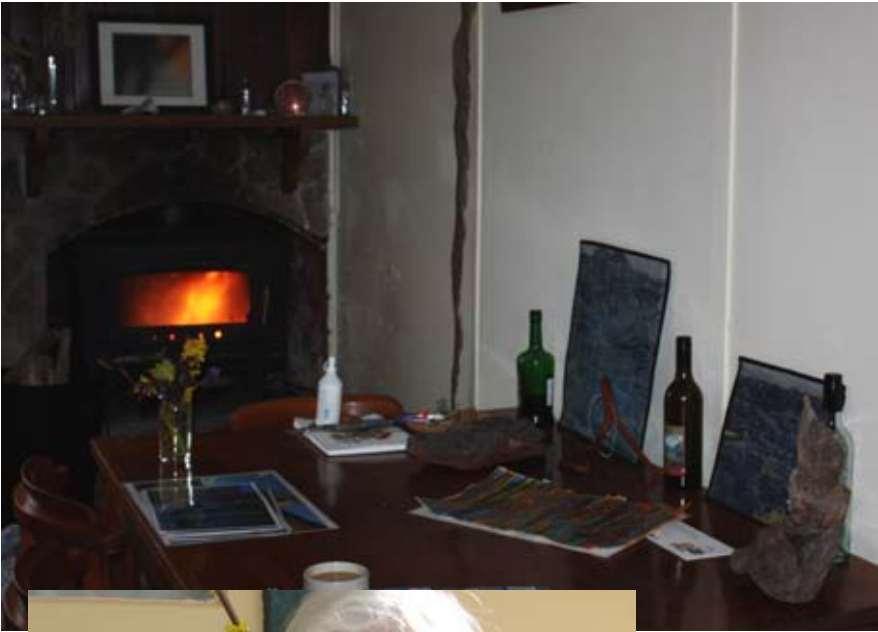
*Graeme, as well as being an NPA member and frequent contributor to this Bulletin, is also well known as an author and publisher of books on local history and bushwalking. His very first*



*bushwalking book, published in 1977 and now out of print, features a photo of the lower Ginninderra falls on its cover.*

**Editor**





*A comfortable, cosy cottage, a sunny veranda, long days to explore and enjoy in and around the Gudgenby Valley, good company— all contributed to an enjoyable and productive Art Week at Gudgenby Cottage this year. We plan to arrange this again next year so if you are interested, plan now.*



# The Australian National Botanic Gardens has a birthday too!

*With the national capital soon to celebrate its centenary, Namadgi National Park having recently celebrated its 25th Anniversary, and NPA ACT celebrating its 50th this year, it should not be forgotten that the ANBG is celebrating forty years since it was officially opened in 1970. However, the Gardens have a considerably longer history than forty years, as the following extract from its home page details.*

## Starting a botanic gardens in the city of flowers

In the 1930s Canberra was known as 'A City of Flowers' in the official tourist guide, but it did not have a botanic gardens. In 1933 there was unanimous support from the Advisory Council that a start be made on laying out the botanic gardens. It was to be close to the proposed university with a scientific basis, rather than 'for ornamental purposes only'.

Dr B T Dickson, then chief of Plant Industry in what was to become the CSIRO, was asked to look at the feasibility of establishing a Gardens and choosing the site. For more than a year Dickson gathered information from botanic gardens around the world, and in September 1935 he presented his report to the Advisory Council. As well as recommending the present site he suggested 'stables, if horse-drawn instead of motor driven machinery is used', and a staff of 59 (which included

an aviary keeper) which would cost the government 12 000 pounds per year.

No action on establishing the gardens was to take place for another ten years, until after the war.

In 1944 a research forester from South Australia, Lindsay Pryor, was appointed Superintendent of Parks and Gardens in Canberra.

## The planting of the gardens

Three weeks after the war ended in 1945 Pryor sought a budget of 1 000 pounds to start work on a botanic gardens. It was to be located on the lower slopes of Black Mountain as had been recommended in the Dickson Report ten years earlier. Over the next few years he started planting a range of eucalypts on the site.

In September 1949 an evening phone call from Pryor to Prime Minister Ben Chifley was all that it took to arrange the ceremonial planting of the 'first' trees. Two days later, during a visit by international foresters on 12 September, Chifley and the Director of Kew Gardens planted an oak and a eucalypt to celebrate the start of a botanic gardens for Canberra. The eucalypt planted on this occasion can be seen just beside the entrance gates of the Gardens.

During the 1950s Lindsay Pryor set the scientific foundation for the botanic gardens by employing a European Professor of Botany, Erwin Gauba, as its first botanist. Gauba established the Garden's herbarium of pressed plant specimens.

The 1960s saw the major development of the Gardens as they are today.

In 1969 Dr Betty Phillips was appointed botanist for the Gardens following her years as ecologist with the Snowy Mountains Hydroelectric Authority. She established the strong linkage between the living plants in the Gardens and the pressed scientific herbarium specimens. This was unique for botanic gardens at that time.

During the 1960s there was an emphasis on field collecting with major trips of several months duration as far afield as Western Australia to ensure that the collection was truly 'national' in character.

The carpark was built and paths and bridges were put in the steep gullies. Buildings were constructed for the Herbarium and Administration, and the Nursery was established on its present site.

## The Gardens officially opened

The 1970s saw the Botanic Gardens develop into one of Canberra's major tourist attractions.

In October 1970 the Gardens were officially opened by the Prime Minister, John Gorton. One of the guests at that ceremony was Dr Bertram Dickson who had written the report recommending establishment of the Gardens back in 1935.

<http://www.anbg.gov.au>

## Sculpture walk



How many of us realise the richness of sculptural works to be enjoyed around our city? In September, Col McAlister led a group around parts of the Australian National University, the National Museum of Australia and New Acton to discover a small selection of the art which surrounds us.

*Left. A Bogong moth between the museum and the Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.*

*Right. A Community notice board with attitude in public space at New Acton.*



# PARKWATCH

## Walk on the wild side now costs the earth

I'm glad Sally Barnes (Letters, September 15) is proud of National Parks' "record in encouraging people of all ages and fitness levels to visit our parks". However, in the case of the coastal walk in the Royal National Park, it is a lack of money that is the problem.

A few years ago several campsites existed along the 29-kilometre coastal walk; today there is only one, so the walk must be completed in two days. My three children are all under 10, and despite being excellent bushwalkers, 10 kilometres a day is their limit, so the walk is out. Our disappointment at not being able to do the walk is heightened by the knowledge that if we had \$1200 (each) we could join a gourmet, three-day walk run by a commercial operator who is allowed to camp at two sites, including beautiful Wattamolla, which is now off-limits to "normal" bushwalkers.

If this is the sort of commercial activity that the new National Parks and Wildlife Bill supports then Ms Barnes should pick her words carefully when talking about exactly whom she is encouraging to visit our national parks. It looks like you now need money to enjoy what used to be freely available to all.

**Robert Smith** Balmain

*Sydney Morning Herald Letters*  
20 September 2010  
(submitted by Di Thompson)

## 'Wild walks' in Victoria's parks— a good idea?

Parks Victoria and tourism interests are proposing a new 148 km north-south multi-day walk through the Grampians. Starting at Mt Stapylton, the walk would go along the Mt Difficult and Mt William ranges and finish at Dunkeld.

It is aimed at bushwalkers who want more 'comfort'. It would have defined campsites (to be pre-booked), with tent platforms and possibly some kind of shelter. There would also be the option of walks guided by licensed tour operators. A long-distance walking route traversing the Grampians sounds like a good idea,

but there are several concerns about the proposal. It would add more tracks to an area which is already fragmented, potentially leading to more weed and pest animal invasion and more human impacts. There are concerns that the walk is aimed at the more affluent end of the market, rather than at all visitors, especially people who don't have ready access to national parks and who could benefit from programs and facilities destined to encourage them. 'Wild walks' appealing to the more affluent are also proposed in the Alpine National Park (Hotham-Falls Creek) and along the Croajingolong coast. An expectation for the alpine walk is that walkers would be well fed at 'wilderness camps' (outside the park), and ferried back to their starting point by helicopter. Helicopters are also proposed for Croajingolong.

In Canada's Jasper National Park helicopters are forbidden to fly across the park's boundary. The idea of using helicopters over remote areas seems completely contradictory to sustainability, self-sufficiency, people's experiences and park values.

*Nature's Voice VNPA Newsletter,*  
number 5, Jul-Aug 2010

## High-altitude rescue effort

The mountain pygmy possum (*Burramys parvus*) is in rapid decline. Our only alpine marsupial is currently confined to an area of less than 5 sq km in the high country of eastern Victoria and southern NSW. The unique animal is at risk of disappearing as climate change pushes the winter snowline higher.

'The current threats, which include predation and habitat disturbance and loss, are predicted to increase with loss of snow cover from global warming', says Dr Linda Broome of the NSW Dept of Environment, Climate Change and Water. 'Food supply may be affected, particularly the abundance and timing of arrival of migratory Bogong moths, an important source of energy and protein for possums arousing from hibernation to breed in spring.'

The mountain pygmy possum is the only marsupial to hibernate under the snow during the coldest months of the year. Periods of short snow cover and early snow melt threaten its survival; thin snow cover decreases insulation from the cold disturbing their hibernation, and early snow melt encourages premature emergence. This is increasingly occurring before the arrival

of Bogong moths, which is encouraging the possums to venture further afield in search of food, putting them at increased risk of predation and disrupting their breeding cycle.

In 1990 the population size was estimated to be 2,635 and is currently now 2,075, with approximately 355 estimated to be in Kosciuszko National Park. 'The mountain pygmy possum is clearly in a precarious position due to its population size and increasing threats predicted with climate change', says Linda. Researchers are exploring potential breeding programs to reintroduce animals to depleted sites, and to introduce them into unoccupied areas of alpine habitat. 'There is a long road ahead', says Linda. 'We need to try every possible strategy to save these amazing creatures.'

*Australian Geographic,*  
Oct-Dec 2010

## Red gums in flood

Heavy rains in southern Australia have started to flood the new Red Gum National Parks, less than two months after they were first created. It is magnificent—the shimmering white trunks of the Red Gums rise directly from the swirling floodwaters, birds are arriving and filling the forests with their song, and all that was brown is now becoming green again.

*National Parks Journal NSW, volume*  
54, number 4, Oct-Dec 2010

## 1890 meets 1960

There was wind. And rain. And a daytime high of 5 degrees, but that did not stop more than 150 people showing up to the open day at the Kiandra Courthouse and Chalet in Kosciuszko National Park. On show were the results of the first stage of heritage restoration works to what was originally a courthouse and police headquarters (1890), but later became a thriving ski-lodge for local communities and Snowy Hydro workers in the 1960s. Prior to restoration, the original 1890s building had been extensively modified and completely subsumed by 1960s additions. The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service has been working on the project for just over a year and as project manager, Jennifer Hewitson, says, 'The feedback we received at the open day was great. We're really encouraged to push ahead with further

(continued on page 20)

## **PARKWATCH** (continued from page 19)

work on the site’.

Also on display was the restored court-room exterior, the interior of the partially restored courtroom, the restored chalet lounge room (complete with furniture and exhibits from the 1960s), and plans for stage two. Ultimately, the restoration when complete will bring together both the 1890s and 1960s building styles, and reconcile them into a modern, comfortable and versatile building to be used as the Kiandra interpretation and education centre. Long-term plans include providing simple café and rest facilities as well as an exhibition space for local history.

*News from the Alps, #40 2010*

### **Fisheries officers vital for marine protection**

With the establishment of Victoria’s marine national parks and sanctuaries in 2002, additional fisheries officers were appointed to ensure their protection. By 2003 there were 72 fisheries officers and three regional fisheries investigators at each of 20 locations in Victoria.

Fast forward to 2010 and marine protection is at risk from a state-wide shortage of fisheries officers. The number of officers has declined by 20% to just 58, leaving them increasingly unable to maintain sustainable marine protection. Increases in fisheries crime are being reported, and marine environments are more vulnerable to over-fishing, illegal take for sale, plunder of endangered species, and pest and disease outbreaks.

Fisheries officers roles extend from compliance and enforcement within recreational and commercial fisheries to community engagement and education, conservation, training, court prosecutions, research, and search and rescue. Their work underpins efforts to ensure marine conservation and sustainable fisheries into the future.

*Nature’s Voice VNPA Newsletter, number 5, Jul–Aug 2010*

### **South Beach NP preserves Aboriginal heritage**

Gazetted on 22 April 2010 the new Gaagal Wangaa (South Beach) National Park is approximately 640ha of Aboriginal land that the Indigenous people of the Nambucca Valley want to share with the rest of community. It contains significant Aboriginal cultural values, including sites demonstrating the continuous use of the area by Aboriginal people for many thousands of years. The

national park also protects undisturbed coastal dune system, patches of rainforest, palm forest, coastal shrubland and heath, and the estuarine communities of mangroves, salt marsh and seagrass beds along Warrell Creek.

The national park is also home to threatened species such as the Little Tern and Beach Stone-curlew. The sand flats at the junction of Warrell Creek and the Nambucca River provide important habitat for migratory wader birds protected by international agreements. The new park also provides a range of recreational activities. It is mostly accessible from the water and is an easy boat ride from Nambucca Heads in the north or Scotts Head from the south. Activities such as boating, fishing, swimming, bushwalking and camping can all be enjoyed in the park.

*National Parks Journal NSW, volume 54, number 4, Oct–Dec 2010*

### **Port Campbell update: a coastline under pressure**

Parks Victoria is apparently planning a multi-million dollar tourism centre, with accommodation and restaurants, at Loch Ard Gorge in Port Campbell NP. So far there has been no community consultation or environmental assessment process. Many locals feel that any new centre (if one is needed at all) should be at the existing Twelve Apostles site, and that this fragile coast does not need two huge car parks within a kilometre of each other. The existing Twelve Apostle ‘centre’ is just a \$5 million toilet block, a small kiosk selling junk food, and a massive car park. Unsightly ad-hoc building extensions have recently been made.

The park’s natural values are also under attack from helicopter flights. There are two existing helicopter licences, and often 15 helicopters ply the narrow coastal national park. There is no cap on helicopter numbers.

Other concerns continue: there is a proposed housing subdivision adjoining the national park in Port Campbell, and the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal passed the Port Campbell Southern Ocean Beach House proposal on 9 May despite serious concerns about cliff collapse and without an updated geotechnical report.

On a positive note, Parks Victoria has turned down a proposal for tours on the beach at London Bridge in order to protect the Little Penguin colony and the fragile coastline. The decision follows a comprehensive assessment of beach

access, including steps and pathways, lookouts, visitor risk and the risks to protected flora and fauna including, as well as the penguins, the Hooded Plover, Eastern Bristlebird and Metallic Sun-orchid.

*Parkwatch, VNPA Sept 2010 no 242*

### **Rebuilding Kinglake NP: the Watsons Creek Biolink project**

The Watsons Creek Biolink area, in the northern block of Kinglake National Park, was not directly affected by the February 2009 bushfires. The aim of the biolink project is to restore habitat between burnt and unburnt patches of bush in the Kinglake/St Andrews area. Some 95% of Kinglake NP was burnt on Black Saturday, with a fire intensity never experienced before. The fire devastated the park’s populations of small mammals such as Brush-tailed Phascogales and Common Dunnarts.

The biolink project will enhance the connection between burnt areas of the national park and unburnt forest (the Warrandyte–Kinglake Nature Conservation Reserve), enabling wildlife to move into the regenerating park along a continuous corridor of vegetation. VNPA volunteers joined Parks Victoria staff and Friends groups to help plant seedlings on 80 ha of the former farmland to improve habitat for native wildlife. Friends of Warrandyte State Park and GreenFleet supplied the plants, grown from locally collected seeds.

The land had been ripped, making planting much easier, and tree guards were placed around the seedlings to protect them from browsing animals like rabbits, kangaroos, wallabies and deer.

*Parkwatch VNPA, Sep 2010, number 242*

### **Capertee – our 800th national park**

The acquisition of the 800th national park, the 2,800 ha Capertee National Park, has not only created a haven for endangered woodland birds, but will also ultimately link with the Airly–Genowlan sector of the Gardens of Stone National Park. The Capertee NP is just north of the Airly–Genowlan Mesa, which may soon be announced as a state conservation area. The planned dedication of Airly Reserve would protect a contiguous forest joining with the million hectare Greater Blue Mountains reserve system. While Capertee has the biodiversity, Airly has

*(continued next page)*

## **PARKWATCH** *(continued)*

the superlative natural beauty and together they will create a truly great addition to the reserve system.

The grassy woodlands of Capertee Valley were poorly represented in existing reserves. The property has 17 different vegetation communities, including Yellow Box–Blakely's Red Gum woodland and Grassy White Box woodland that are endangered ecological communities. The adjoining Crown lands on the Airly and Genowlan mountains are spectacular areas that can now be reserved after a campaign stretching back to 1985. It is essential that these mountains are reserved and managed in harmony with the new Capertee National Park so its spectacular scenic features are not degraded through neglect.

The NSW Government should reserve the Airly–Genowlan mountains as a state conservation area together with the other easily reserved areas included in the Gardens of Stone proposal. Administrative details have delayed reservation action, necessitating NPWS to overcome major hurdles with no certainty of a conservation outcome. A provisional draft plan of management has been prepared by NPWS for the proposed reserve to satisfy the miner, Centennial Coal, that the Airly–Genowlan reserve would not cause a problem for future mining operations.

National Parks have certainly done the job, but what about the politicians? It seems that political support for reservation of a state conservation area can be contemplated only when all necessary impediments to coal mining arising from conservation concerns are addressed. This method of problem solving has taken over 5 years to reach the point of reservation.

*Colong Bulletin, Number 237,  
Sep 2010*

### **Changes to the Native Vegetation Act bushfire regulations**

The Nature Conservation Society of SA was invited to provide feedback on recent changes to the bushfire regulation of the Native Vegetation Act. Our comments called for monitoring and evaluation of the impacts of vegetation clearance decisions on biodiversity and fire safety, and the use of sound biodiversity information and ecological principles to inform native vegetation management. We also highlighted the need for bushfire risk (and implications for native vegetation clearance) to be considered in development planning.

The society has been keeping a close eye on the Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission and its potential implications for fire management in SA. With the recent release of the final report of the commission we are anxiously waiting to see how the South Australian Government reacts to the recommendations, with particular reference to prescribed burning and native vegetation.

*Xanthopus, Volume 28, Part 2, 2010*

### **Valuing our national parks**

Over the years the term 'national park' has taken on a specific meaning that goes well beyond the original terminology. It has come to be associated with the very best examples of Australia's terrestrial biodiversity, of remnant ecosystems and of endangered or listed species that need special protection. National parks cover less than 4.5% of Australia's land mass and make up nearly 40% of our National Reserve System. They are the backbone of our efforts to preserve a comprehensive, national representation of our native vegetation, fauna and ecosystems, and the last best hope we have of protecting adequate examples of all of Australia's remaining biodiversity and ecosystems.

The reality is that our national parks and not 'national' in any real sense of the word. They are in fact an ad-hoc collection of state, territory and federal public land with quite variable arrangements for their management and protection. But they share common threats and common challenges. Apart from the increasing threat of operating in a rapidly warming climate, national parks across Australia face a frightening array of completely avoidable problems.

Budget cuts and staff losses are reducing the effectiveness of their management. At the same time pressure is on them to provide an 'economic' return or at least to offset their cost. NSW is amending its legislation to open the wilderness areas to luxury accommodation, off-track mountain biking, and helicopter-serviced standing camps. Proposals to increase tourist facilities such as roads, cafes, ski areas and hotels in national parks are multiplying. It is these threats that should be the most manageable yet are proving the most intractable.

What can we do to make a difference? The answer is to get practical, specific and targeted.

First, we need accredited national data that establishes the non-commercial value of our protected areas over the

long time frame in which environments operate. We need data that enable us to measure the actual cost of our human activities across this longer time frame. We need to be able to specifically say, for example, damaging this bit of river, this bit of mountain, extinguishing this species, will cost us as a society. We need data that enable our park managers to do their work effectively and that put our parks in the national and international context.

Second, we need to develop a national approach to managing our protected areas; one which enables the challenges and problems facing us to be addressed under a single regulatory framework and without regard to lines on a map. We can establish an independent national body to monitor ecosystem operations across the landscape; to collect and analyse data at both a local and national scale; and to report annually on the state of the environment, including funding and management resources.

Third, we have to alter our national values system to include a new consciousness across all levels of society. National parks have to become embedded in the Australian psyche as symbols of freedom, of nationalism and of our deepest sense of worth. We need data and analysis that counter the prevailing economic paradigm. We need statutory reform of national park management to remove much of the political wheeling and dealing. And we need to achieve a fundamental shift in how Australians relate to national parks and their environment. They don't have to like it but they do need to love it.

*Xanthopus, Volume 28, Part 2, 2010*

*(This is a very shortened version of  
Christine Goonrey's speech at the  
NPA ACT Symposium in May  
as reprinted in Xanthopus)*

### **Buffel Grass**

Wildlife Queensland has raised the issue of Buffel Grass in some national parks. Buffel Grass is seen as advantageous for the pastoral industry, but creates problems when it spreads into national parks. Council discussed the matter and agrees that the problem may well require some innovative approaches, such as a controlled trial project to determine cost effective and efficient ways to overcome the problem and to protect national park values.

*NPA News (Qld), volume 80,  
number 9, Oct 2010*

**Compiled by Hazel Rath**

# NPA notices



## New members of the association

The NPA ACT welcomes the following new members:

Julian Blackham  
 Dick Johnston  
 Mike Huson  
 Rupert Barnett  
 Mick and Kirrilee Gentleman  
 Nicholas Tebbey.

We look forward to seeing everyone at NPA activities.

### National Parks Association Calendar

	December	January	February	March
Public holidays	Sat 25 Mon 27	Sat 1 Wed 26	—	Mon 14
General meetings	—	—	Thurs 17	Thurs 17
Committee meetings	Tues 7	—	Tues 1	Tues 1
NPA ACT Christmas Party	Sun 12 <sup>1</sup>			
Gudgeny Bush Regeneration <sup>2</sup>	Sat 11 <sup>2a</sup>	—	Sat 12	Sat 12

Further details: **1.** NPA ACT Christmas Party. See notice below.

**2.** GBRG. Meet Namadgi Visitor Centre 9:15am or Yankee Hat car park 10:00am.

**2a.** December work day combines with GBRG Christmas Party.

## Sunday 12 December 11:30am

At the Orroral Picnic Area (to the left of the Orroral Road just beyond the camping ground).

Bring a picnic lunch.

Nibbles, drinks and Christmas Cake provided.



**NPA Christmas Party**

The final celebration of the association's highly successful 50th anniversary year!

An event that should not be missed.

Check *Burning Issues* for late information.



Search out your usable but no-longer-needed 'stuff' for the usual entertainment—

**the Christmas Party fund-raising Auction.**



One of the many sculptures in Canberra which are often passed un-noticed. Look closely at the rocks outside the School of Art. See page 18.

### Front cover photographs

**Main photo.** Removal of stray fence wire by the Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group.

Life member Fiona MacDonald Brand noted that "a fine July 10 was used by a work party to roll up and stack long lengths of wire from the fence line proceeding uphill from Hospital Creek. A cheerful group of ten enjoyed lunch together at 1:00pm, then back to work. It was a change from frequent days of cutting and dabbling!"

And, it would seem, a very productive day was had by all.  
 Photo by Sabine Friedrich

**Insets, Left.** River crossing, Timor Leste (article page 6)

Photo provided by Elizabeth Kenworthy Teather

**Centre.** Petroglyphs at Mutawintji National Park (page 13)

Photo by Peter Tedder

**Right.** Glenburn homestead undergoing restoration (page 4).

Photo by Col McAlister

### Back cover photograph

A chilly early morning captured at Currango Homestead.

Photo by Sabine Friedrich

## Gudgeny Bush Regeneration Group.

This group's

### Christmas Party

takes place on the afternoon of its last work party for the year. Saturday 11 December will start as a morning work party; then adjourn for lunch at Frank and Jacks Hut. Bring food to share. Relax for the afternoon, or explore the area we have worked so hard to regenerate.

This Bulletin was prepared by

Editor: Max Lawrence

Sub-editor: Ed Highley

Presentation: Adrienne Nicholson

# General Meeting

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



## Thursday 17 February

*Looking at treasures  
of yesteryear.*

NPA members

A box of slides of NPA activities from times gone by recently came to light.

However, the committee realised that they didn't know who all the people were, nor what some of the occasions were. Members can help by coming along to a *Nostalgia Night* of historic slides.

You may also wish to bring up to 5 of your own slides (and yes, we do mean slides— we will have an old-fashioned slide projector available). Bring old photos/albums/mementos also, and share reminiscences of past NPA events. Newer members may be surprised/fascinated/amazed at past association activities!

If you have any queries, please contact a committee member.



### **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**

<i>President</i>	Rod Griffiths	6288 6988 (h)
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<i>Vice-President</i>	Vacant	
<i>Secretary</i>	Sonja Lenz	6251 1291 (h)
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<i>Treasurer</i>	Chris Emery	6249 7604 (h)
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#### **Committee members**

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#### **Conveners**

<i>Outings Sub-committee</i>	Mike Smith	6286 2984 (h)	msmith@netspeed.com.au
<i>Publications Sub-committee</i>	Sabine Friedrich	6249 7604 (h)	sabine.canberra@gmail.com
<i>Bulletin Working Group</i>	Max Lawrence	6288 1370 (h)	mlawrence@netspeed.com.au

**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.

**Phone:** (02) 6229 3201 0412 071 382  
**Website:** [www.npaact.org.au](http://www.npaact.org.au)  
**Email:** [admin@npaact.org.au](mailto:admin@npaact.org.au)  
**Address:** GPO Box 544, Canberra ACT 2601

#### **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 the above subscription categories 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. Items accepted for publication will be subject to editing. Send all items to The *Bulletin* Team, [admin@npaact.org.au](mailto:admin@npaact.org.au), or the postal address above.

**Deadline for the March 2011 issue: 31 January 2011.**

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ISSN 0727-8837



**Thinking Christmas Season? Think books— Think NPA Field Guides**



For information on NPA ACT activities, please visit our website  
<http://www.npaact.org.au>