



NPA *Bulletin*

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National Parks Association of the Australian Capital Territory Inc



Move for northern ACT National Park



Watching our water



New Reptile & Frog book launched



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

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From the President

Dear colleagues, warm wishes for the start of another year. Now that the festive season is over there are many issues to go on with.

In the second half of 2011, the ACT's Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment released her findings on her investigation into the Canberra Nature Park, the Molonglo River Corridor and the Googong Foreshores. The report's findings were not picked up to any great extent by the ACT's media, which is a great pity as it is an important document that deals with the many issues confronting the aforementioned reserves.

One of the key recommendations to come out of the investigation was about improving the condition and resilience of our nature reserves by improving connectivity between them. Without the maintenance of biodiversity corridors that join them our reserves become vulnerable islands.

Along the northern border of the ACT there is the potential to maintain a magnificent crescent of land that would link up existing reserves and support threatened grassy woodlands. This area is subject to planning pressures at this very moment and it was pleasing to see the Commissioner also make recommendations about a new northern national park. This is a key point of the NPA ACT's submission to the investigation.

However, the ACT should further embrace the opportunity it has to improve connectivity between other grassy woodland

reserves throughout Canberra. The creation of a new national park based on the protection of lowland grassy woodlands and, particularly, the nationally threatened yellow box-red gum ecosystem, would be a major achievement for the ACT and would be recognised both nationally and internationally.

And what better way to celebrate Canberra's 100th anniversary?

The NPA ACT's proposal for new national park is mirrored just across the border by a proposal to create a new NSW national park stretching from Ginninderra Falls to the Murrumbidgee. A very enthusiastic group is campaigning to bring Ginninderra Falls into public ownership and the NPA ACT wishes it all the best in its endeavours. The proposed national park would join the northern reaches of the Murrumbidgee Corridor, enhancing the benefit of both reserves.

In early February the *Canberra Times* ran a depressing story about the killing of two kangaroos in the Mount Ainslie Nature Reserve. They had been shot by arrows and rightly these actions



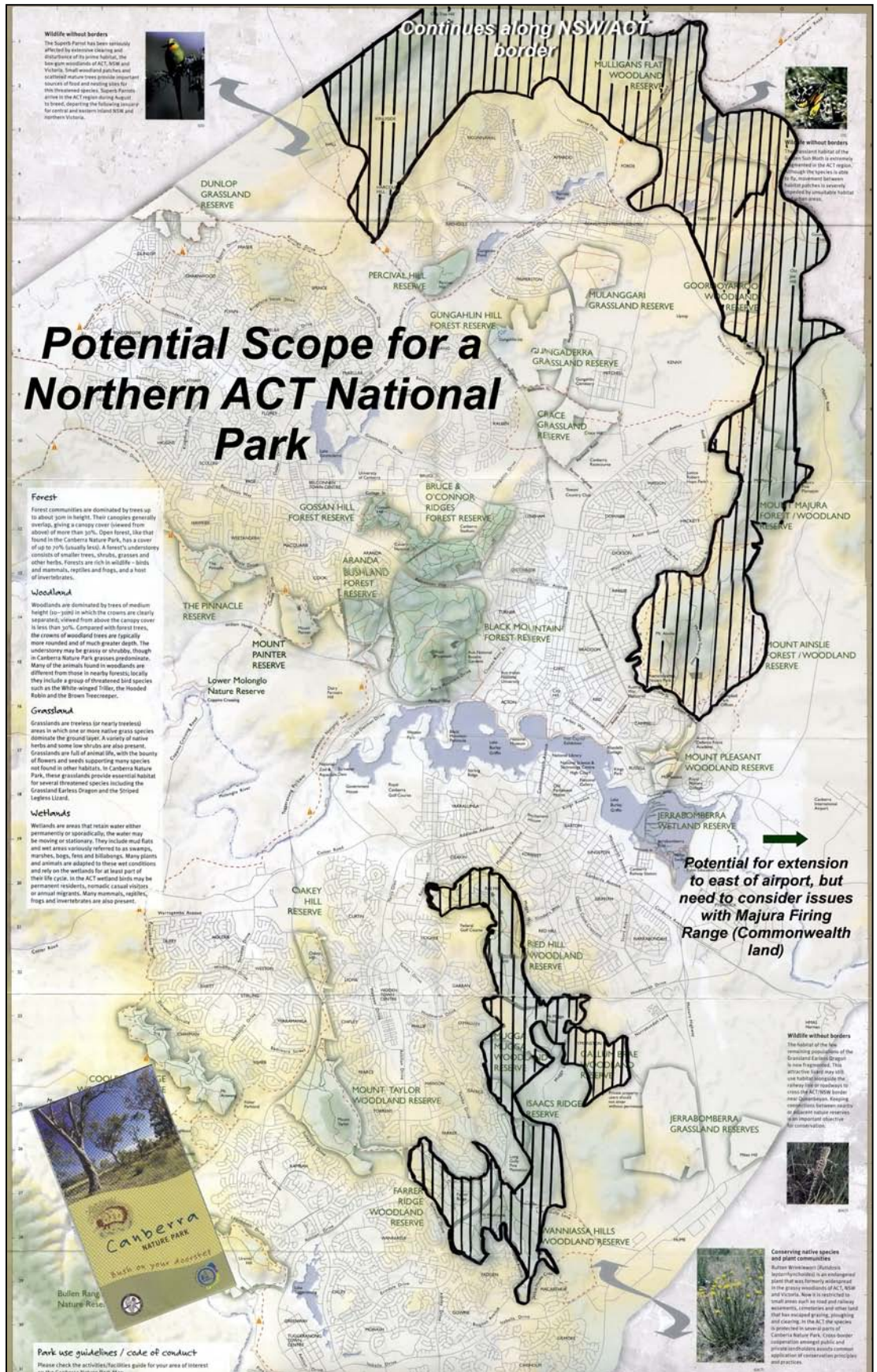
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From the President (continued)

had raised the ire of animal protection and nature conservation groups, with calls for tougher penalties for those who injure native wildlife. This incident, unfortunately, is just one of many illegal activities in the ACT's conservation reserves. The amenity of our reserves throughout Canberra is often threatened by things like the dumping of rubbish, the building of tracks and jumps for bikes, and off-lead dog walking. In Namadgi, there is constant illegal vehicle access and illegal pig hunting, which can disrupt the systematic controls in place for the reduction of pig numbers. It is therefore important that, if we see such illegal activities, we report them as quickly as possible to Crime Stoppers, Canberra Connect or the ACT parks service.

Finally, on a sad note, the ACT environment lost one of its champions in January. John Hibberd, who until November last year was the Conservation Council's executive director, lost his battle with cancer. He was campaigning until the very last moment, pushing for the creation of the new national park for the ACT and encouraging others to continue his fight to protect the last significant colony of koalas on the south coast near Wapengo. John was an excellent friend to the NPA ACT and had campaigned on environmental matters across the globe for 40 years. He will be sorely missed.

Rod Griffiths



Remembering a true friend of NPA

On 21 January 2012, the ACT's conservation movement lost a true champion. John Hibberd was the executive director of ConsACT, the Conservation Council ACT Region, up until November 2011. He was passionate about biodiversity and worked closely with the NPA ACT on many issues. His interests were diverse and his campaign style was direct and reasoned. The following are the speaking notes for the tribute given at John's memorial service by the NPA ACT's president, Rod Griffiths.

Family, friends, colleagues of John, I have the honour of talking about his conservation activities.

My name is Rod Griffiths and I'm the treasurer of ConsACT and president of the National Parks Association of the ACT and through these roles I was able to work closely with John during his years with the Conservation Council.

John brought so much to ConsACT. He joined as a person with 40 years of experience in conservation that was built on a scientific education.

One of John's strong campaigning points was that, wherever possible, conservation actions should be scientifically based.

John brought a fantastic feistiness to his campaigning, but he was always wonderfully personable as well.

Let me quote from his job application. It gives a great insight into his experience and his personality. We had asked John to comment on his negotiation, representation and influencing skills and part of his response was:

'Many of my roles and positions have required acting as a spokesperson including:

- *Executive Secretary (Director) of the Nature Conservation Council;*
- *Senior Scientific Officer with the National Parks and Wildlife Service;*
- *Founding Convenor of the South East Region Conservation Alliance;*
- *Foundation Chair of Wapengo Watershed Association;*
- *Team Leader and/or Project Director of 12 major Australian and overseas environmental projects;*
- *National Policy Co-ordinator for the Australian Greens; and*
- *Senior Research Fellow at the Environmental Research Institute, University of Wollongong.*

Anyone who knows me would testify to my loquaciousness – what I have learnt over the years is also how to listen!'

A lovely example of John – to the point but also with a sense of mischief.

John's conservation activities as you can see from his job application were broad. From campaigning for wetlands in Somerset in the UK to his nine international assignments (many for AusAID) that took him throughout Asia and the South Pacific on issues ranging from rainforest conservation to waste management.

So what did John achieve here in his role as director of ConsACT?

Let me say that he quickly saw that planning in the ACT was a key issue for conservation in the Territory. So he helped bring government officials, business and the community together through *Bush on the Boundary*: a forum for communication and co-operation in issues arising from the interplay of developed and natural areas.

He was deeply concerned about the potential for fragmentation of the ACT's natural areas through developments such as those occurring in the Gungahlin rim and the Molonglo valley. John was a key supporter of the creation of the Kama Woodlands Nature Reserve in the Molonglo and he worked hard to involve the developers of North Watson to buy into appropriate conservation outcomes.

He was a strong advocate for the need for a single government conservation agency for the ACT.

And he left a legacy through the Biodiversity Mapping project, which has provided conservation groups in the ACT with access to nature and planning data in a GIS format. This was launched only last November.

Being the executive director of a conservation council is not only about campaigning. John's ability to nurture and encourage the Council's staff is borne out by the deep regard they have for him.

Staff and board meetings were also social occasions where John's love of wine, cheese and good chocolate cake was always evident.

John brought excellent management skills to his role at ConsACT. He managed magnificently the shoestring budget that is the lot of many NGOs, and lobbied continuously for improvements in ConsACT's accommodation situation.

John had one regret – that the last significant koala colony on the NSW south coast near his beloved Wapengo had not been protected and the koala's habitat could still be logged. There is a fight for all of us to take up.

Farewell, mate.

Rod Griffiths

Daisy Boo Boo!

The editor recently received a note from Roger Farrow, a member very well versed in matters natural and scientific. Roger's note reads as follows:

Do you remember me asking you about those daisies from Tantangara on the front cover of the March 2011 Bulletin?

I've just spent a couple of days in that area with Keith McDougall from the invasive species section of the NSW

EPA mapping the ox-eye daisy, a notorious invasive species in the Tantangara area, which NPWS is trying to contain by aerial spraying.

Well, that is what your "Tantangara Daisy" is! I thought you would like to know. It appears to have suddenly spread through that area following the fires and the breaking of the drought.

Sorry!

Editor



New horizons for the Gudgenby Bushies

Anyone who has visited the Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Area will know that the trees planted are growing well. After good rainfalls over the past 2–3 seasons, the trees are looking healthy, with some flowering for the first time.

However, due to poor soil and earlier drought conditions much of the understorey is bare and encouraging to weed growth. In other parts, the rain has resulted in poor drainage and boggy areas and the trees already planted have died from waterlogging.

The Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group decided that seed collection of suitable understorey species should be commenced so that we can germinate some shrub and flower cover. A licence was obtained and seed collection commenced in January.

To date we have had two extra field days with more to follow as species set seed and ripen for collection. The season has been cool and wet, and seed has been slow to set. So far, three species of wattle have been collected from the Hospital Creek area where several *Acacia* species were sown in 1999.



Sonja Lenz and Chesley Engram reading the rain gauge
Photo Kevin McCue

Acacia siculiformis is indigenous to the area but was not included in our mixture at the time of sowing, so we hope that we can propagate more of it to add to the trees already established.

Some tea-tree (*Leptospermum* spp.) capsules have also been collected and we plan to sow those in the gullies and wetter parts of our regeneration area.

Our collection for this season will, we hope, also include some herb and grass species but that will depend on whether we can harvest their seed at the right time. We are looking forward to sowing seed again to enhance the understorey cover and reduce the incidence of weeds.

Seed collection has provided us with new plans to enrich the ecosystem in the regeneration area and we look forward to seeding again this coming autumn.

Hazel Rath

Glenburn/Burbong update

Good things are happening

First, the Parks Service squeezed \$3,000 out of its extremely tight budget to purchase materials for Glenburn/Burbong projects this financial year. Graham Scully prepared a list covering several areas including drainage to both huts of Glenburn homestead, the repair/replacement of timber posts and plates of the slab hut of Glenburn homestead and the capping of the stone walls of Collier's homestead. The Parks Service is considering what can be done in consultation with a heritage consultant and members of Friends of Glenburn.

NPA financial support

Second, the Committee of the National Parks Association (NPA) ACT decided to reimburse the Friends of Glenburn up to \$3,000 for expenditure on Glenburn/Burbong. This decision is not restricted to expenditure this financial year. The first project has been the commissioning of a landscape architect to prepare a rehabilitation plan for the Collier's and Curley's orchards.

Donations sought

Third, the Committee of NPA ACT has agreed to assist people wishing to make donations towards the cost of works at Glenburn/Burbong. The donation should be made to the 'National Parks Association of the ACT Inc.' and state a preference that the money be spent on Glenburn/Burbong. The Committee will then take this preference into consideration when authorising expenditure on Glenburn/Burbong. All donations of over \$2 to the NPA are income-tax deductible. So dig deep.

Weed control and heritage conservation

Fourth, the Parks Service has carried out extensive spraying to control weeds, especially blackberries, at Coppin's chimney, Collier's homestead and Glenburn homestead.

Fifth, Friends of Glenburn wrote to the Chief Minister asking the Government to provide ongoing recurrent funding to the Territory and Municipal Services' budget to protect and conserve the early European relics in Glenburn/Burbong for current and future generations.

Sixth, a Park Ranger, a heritage consultant and I discussed on-site what needs to be done at Glenburn homestead and Coppin's chimney. The capping of the stone walls at Collier's homestead ruins was also discussed, but we did not visit that site. The Parks Service will prepare implementation plans for the three sites, based on available resources.

Work parties continue

Finally, the program of work parties continues. The posts of the Glenburn hay shed have been re-erected or straightened, and fallen stones have been moved away from the outside walls of Collier's homestead ruins. The next work party is scheduled for 24–25 March. So enter your diaries and contact Graham Scully nearer the dates to find out the tasks to be tackled. On a sadder note, there was substantial damage done to the Glenburn shearing shed by a storm in December 2011. The leaseholder's family and friends carried out substantial stabilisation work but there is still much to be done to repair the damage.

Col McAlister

Where the Ice-Trees burn

or How Tim's library led to a brainstorm about high country people, poetry and places

I'd been to several of Tim and partner Janet's famous New Year's Eve parties and occasionally glimpsed a study with a promising wall of books but never had a close look. A faintly veiled prompt to come for lunch did the trick. Having shared some ancient personal parallels about Palm Beach, Temora and Yanco while breaking a fresh loaf of heavenly bread and chunks of tasty cheese it was time to take a look. Aha, a library similar to mine; lots of physical adventure, natural history, cultural themes, guides to national parks, and authors contemplating the meaning of life, especially the outdoor life.

Then, one I hadn't seen before: *Letters Lifted into Poetry – selected correspondence between David Campbell and Douglas Stewart 1946–1979* published by the National Library in 2006. 'Could I borrow this one?' 'Sure, I'll make a note'.

I met David when I was preparing an exhibition about rainforests at the Albert Hall in 1978. He was delivering one of his poems written in very large letters on a big scroll of butcher's paper – a grand statement indeed. An open, broad-cheeked fellow with a boxing or football flattened nose and a shock of flowing, blondish hair he had an air of Cambridge, WWII fighter pilot, lady killer and landed gentry about him. Most of it turned out to be true.

In 1990 I received permission from his widow, Judy, to use his puzzling but luminous line 'Where the Ice-Trees Burn' as part of the title for a book of photos about Kosciusko. Anyone who has seen ice-encrusted snow gums in winter will have noted the flaming

colours in the trunk. They may also be aware of the burning that takes place when the sun is bounced on to the trunks by thousands of tiny snow crystals. A more literal burning takes place when in years like 1939 and 2003 the trees go up in smoke.

Douglas Stewart I knew of through his school curriculum play, *Fire on the Snow*. It's a dramatised version of Scott's journey to the South Pole. My studying it at Orange High may have set off a subliminal desire to explore our snow country. In later years I'd enjoyed some of Stewart's poems including *Spider Gums*, and dipped into his fishing stories. Some of these had been published in *Fishing around the Monaro* by ANU Press as part of the delightful and groundbreaking Canberra Companions. Other titles included *Canberra Region Car Tours* by Graeme Barrow, *Beyond the Cotter* by Alan Mortlock and yours truly, and *Rambles around Canberra*, by members of this association. They used to sell for \$3.95!

The foreword in my silverfish and light-affected *Rambles* copy was written by Ian Currie, then president, in 1976. Walk No. 3 described a short ramble to the Cork Oak plantation. I got there for the first time after the annual NPA Christmas party last December. As I was teleported back to a European forest childhood, torrents of water corkscrewed down Woden drains, and dry lightning fizzed and sizzled into the ground a few hundred yards away. My metal handled umbrella did not, thank God, become a lighting rod. To be sure, I dragged it along the ground with an insulating forked wooden stick. Walk No. 6 up and around Mt Taylor in that *Rambles* book reminded of a boring thesis I wrote about the life cycle of the casuarinas growing on our hills. Perhaps it's time I went back to take some before and after photos.

Instead of an index of events and places, the book of letters has one for the people mentioned – academic, educated types like Manning Clark and Rosemary Dobson as well as farmers like Jack Snow and skiers like Johnny Abbottsmith. In a letter to Doug from Wells Station dated 22 June 1953, David describes a week's skiing with Johnny. 'The snow-gums were writhed up like leeches from the snow ... most fantastic trees. Johnny is training huskies for a trip from Kosciusko to Rules Point ... a tough little character with one blue eye, and a wife

like a chocolate cream.'

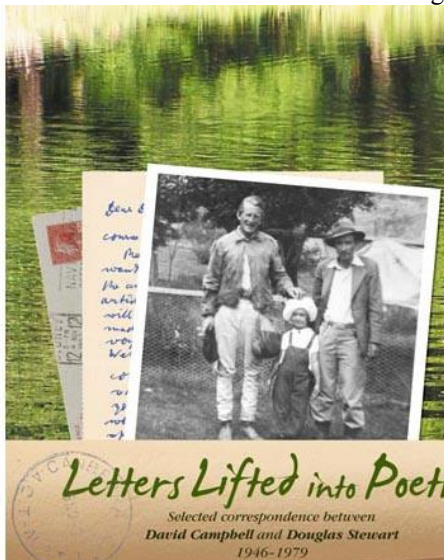
Seven years later, as a gangly teenager, I met Johnny and his delectable wife at his caravan park at The Creel near where the Snowy used to mingle with the Thredbo River. We were on a family holiday skiing at Smiggin Holes and Perisher Valley. The caravan we stayed in was a chilly, riveted, square aluminium box with round corners. When his place was flooded by a rising Jindabyne Dam, Johnny was allocated another patch at the turn-off to Thredbo. Later still, after I had started to photograph, write about and ski all over the high country, I interviewed him and put his stories into *People of the Australian High Country*. He's there for eternity.

When he told me he had taught Australian soldiers to ski on snow-covered hills in Lebanon at the beginning of WWII I thought he was pulling both legs and the end of my nose. To prove it he brought out an album of photos showing lines of rifle carrying men climbing or schussing snow-covered hills. Against a backdrop of snow-laden Lebanese cedars the peaceful scenes were very appealing and seemed to have none of the foreboding of war and mayhem. He also told me he used to look after huts like Whites River, which may have made him a pioneering hut caretaker. My last view of Johnny was standing over a machine polishing some precious stones he had found.

The name Wells Station at the top of all of David's letters had me intrigued. I knew he had lived near Canberra and then near Bungendore, but exactly where? Suddenly the lights went on. A couple of years ago I had stumbled on his poems inscribed on metal plates attached to wooden posts in a park named after him in Harrison. It was just up the road from home. Amazing. He was being commemorated not only for his poetry but because he once owned the land. His farm had included parts of Mulligans Flat and Goorooyaroo, two reserves on which I've left numerous footprints and a little pile of ash here and there (but, shhh, don't tell anyone).

Some years after David had sold up and moved to properties the other side of Queanbeyan, his old place was bought by Eric Mawson. Eric, who came from an old Monaro family that once had grazing leases in the ice-treed high country, used to be a part owner of Perisher View, a lodge located on a

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Increased environmental flows for the 'bidgee

The October–December 2011 *Bulletin* reported on the increased flows into the Snowy River from Jindabyne Dam. This event received much publicity at the time. A similar but less publicised release took place into the Murrumbidgee River.

During the period September 2011 to April 2012, increased environmental flows from Tantangara Dam into the Murrumbidgee River are being undertaken. The releases generally alternate between 15 ML/day for 10 days followed by 100–150 ML/day for 4 days. However, for 9 days in October and 23 days in December, the flows increased to 1,500 ML/day and 300–400 ML/day, respectively.

The accompanying photographs of the Murrumbidgee were taken in the vicinity of the Gulf Plain on 17 October during the middle of the 1,500 ML/day release (see also back cover).

For more information about Snowy Hydro water releases, look under the 'water' tab on www.snowyhydro.com.au.

Martin Chalk

*The flooded Murrumbidgee - Gulf Plain
Photo Martin Chalk*



Where the Ice-Trees burn *(continued from page 6)*

windswept gap next to the Kosciuszko road. He gave me a job making beds and sandwiches during university holidays in the 1960s.

In a snow-heavy year, I dug light-giving tunnels to every window. As the snow above the tunnels melted and dripped it created a fairytale forest of colour refracting icicles, some as thick and long as my arms. It helped me get the attention of beautiful Carmina, a Portuguese waitress with evasive eyes, glossy lips and a seriously Catholic view of intimacy.

One day Eric lent me a pair of unedged, uncambered, wooden cross-country skis, and with advice about waxing from Rudi, the cook, as well as a sandwich or two, I took off across the hills.

Away from the resort there was another world – silent, austere, untracked, wild, dangerous and spine-tinglingly exciting. I came under the spell of burning ice-trees and one evening, while overlooking Mt Twynam on the Main Range, saw my first fire on the snow (a red sunset). It was the beginning of an affair that lasted for 35 years, inspired me to write many articles and books, led me to interview old timers, created a publishing business and brought me close to feted literary minds like David Campbell and Douglas Stewart. Thank you, Tim and Janet, for bringing it all into surprisingly sharp relief.

Klaus Hueneke

Klaus is the author of ten books, mostly set in the high country. The last, A String of Pearls, is a book of photos about the South Coast.

Namadgi

A National Park for the National Capital

And still our book gets good reviews. This one was written by Ian Mathews AM, appears in the Spring 2011 edition of The Order which is the national magazine of the Order of Australia Association.

Every Australian has a national park relatively close to home. We are blessed for they are all special in their respective ways.

The Namadgi National Park sits on 106,000 hectares and covers almost half of the Australian Capital Territory, just south and west of Canberra.

The park fits neatly into the national capital's role. It is part of the Australian Alps National Parks, which stretch from Baw Baw National Park in southern Victoria through Kosciuszko National Park to the Brindabella National Park, and links wildlife corridors 1,000km north to Queensland, to the inland plains of NSW and the NSW south coast.

However, for those who may not be able to visit Namadgi (or for those who prefer a book to walking), this publication offers a treat.

It is richly illustrated with coloured photographs some giving an idea of the grandeur of the park. Others are close-ups of flowers, lichens, birds, spiders and insects. The text covers geology, Aboriginal and settler history.

All Australia's national parks are "the best", from Kakadu to Freycinet, so let's not compile a league table. Simply enjoy them, including Namadgi.

The 'whys and wherefores' of Waterwatch

Since 2003, the Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group and, by loose extension, the NPA, have been involved in Waterwatch in the Gudgenby Valley. The Gudgenby activity is focused on three creek catchments (Little Dry, Hospital and Bogong) that feed into the Gudgenby River and thence into the Murrumbidgee. But this is only a small part of the whole picture.

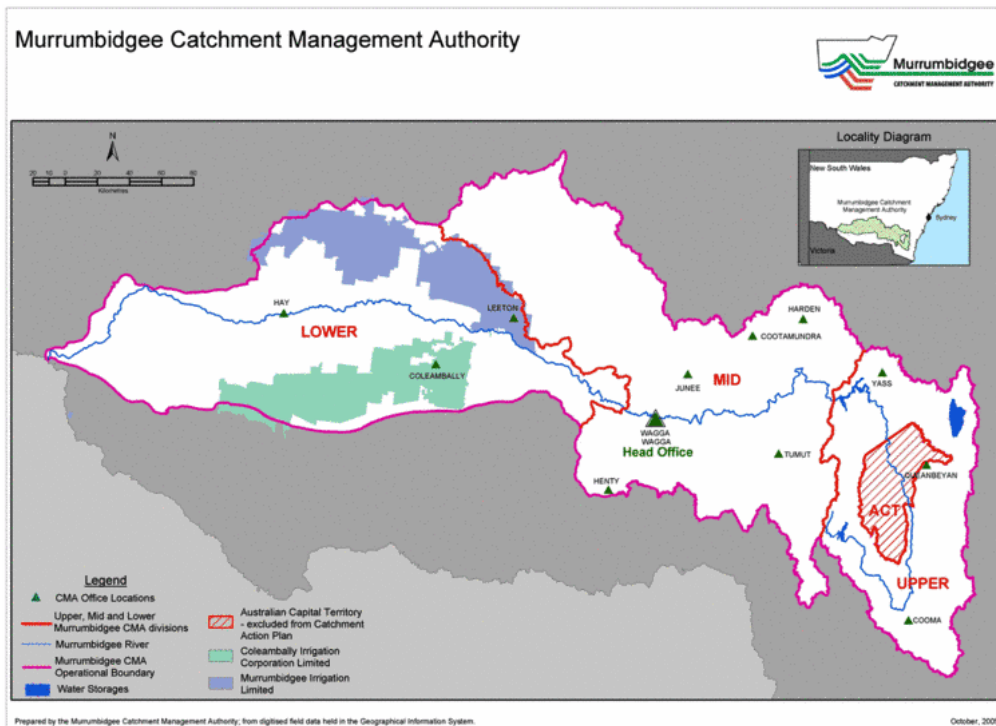
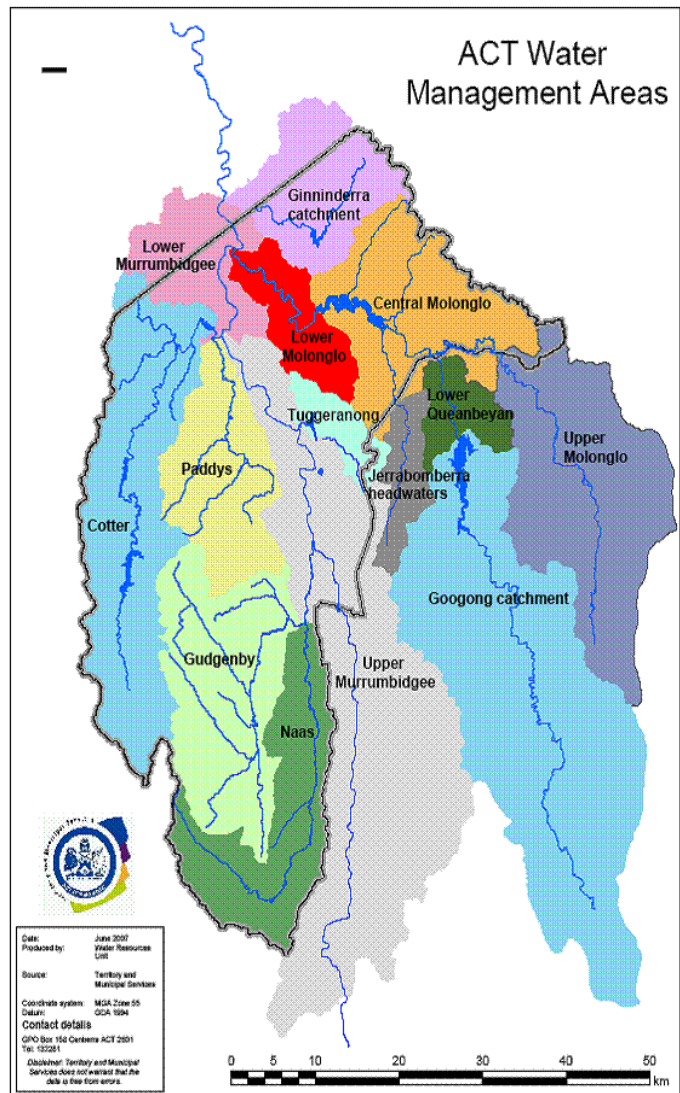
First, a few words about the objectives of Waterwatch. The principal task is to undertake physical and chemical analysis of creek water at predetermined sites. In my case, I undertake this activity on behalf of the GBRG once every alternate month at seven sites. The physical and chemical analysis provides markers that determine the health of the creek. Additionally, visual observations based on standardised assessment criteria about the general condition of the riparian zone are included in reports. Once a year I also undertake a census of macro-invertebrate water life (colloquially termed 'bug-watch') at two sites that cover all three catchments. The number and types of 'bugs' when applied to a standardised calculation also give an indication of stream health. This is then used to crosscheck with the physical and chemical analysis.

There is also the opportunity to undertake 'frog-watch'. However, I don't get involved in this as a discrete activity but do report on the frog species that I can identify during each Waterwatch session.

Waterwatch is a national program for community water-quality monitoring. It involves community groups such as Landcare, Park Care, catchment groups, schools and individuals who regularly monitor the water quality of local creeks.

Within the ACT, Waterwatch is coordinated by TAMS through three offices: the Ginninderra Catchment Group, the Molonglo Catchment Group and the Southern ACT Catchment Group. The GBRG falls within the third group.

Waterwatch activities in surrounding NSW upstream of the ACT are coordinated by the Cooma Region Waterwatch Group.



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Summer comes in

our world
is on a long-haul flight
rushing on
we sit in rows –
images flicker on our screens

summer comes in
all too soon these days
Gaia broods
in sultry stillness
ants scurry busily

dry country
heat shimmers
wind whispers ...
faint croak of ravens
faint smell of smoke

the wheel
of the year turns us
slow cooking
occasional basting
we shall be done by autumn

all around me
shadows lengthen
this moment
sunlight still lingers
on the distant ranges

Gerry Jacobson

Koala survey

Our guest speaker at the February General Meeting was Chris Allen, Senior Threatened Species Officer with the NSW Environment Protection Authority. Chris gave us a most informative and entertaining talk on the work the Authority has been doing to survey the sparse and disjunct populations of koalas in the south-east of the state. This work is being undertaken with the help and cooperation of local volunteers, especially including Indigenous communities.

Hunting, habitat loss, disease and predation have taken their toll

In setting the scene, Chris told us that in the early days of European settlement twenty million koala skins were exported from Australia. This, combined with extensive loss of habitat, meant that by as early as 1900 the koala population in Australia had crashed. Before this, there were dense koala populations in the forests on the most fertile soils, and populations of much lower density on the remaining marginal forests. The former areas were lost to the koalas very early in the piece as prime forest habitats were cleared for farming etc., leaving the remaining koalas to eke out some sort of existence in the remaining less-well-endowed areas. Even in these areas their existence was threatened by forest management practices involving grazing, firing and logging, predation by dogs, and wildfire, hunting, drought and disease (most notably chlamydia).

Three remaining populations

In south-eastern NSW there are three known remaining populations of koalas – in the Southern Highlands, the Monaro and the Far South Coast. The Wapengo koalas referred to by Rod Griffiths in his obituary for John Hibberd elsewhere in this *Bulletin* are in the last-named area. These three areas are very possibly the last remaining original populations in Australia, koalas in other areas having been translocated from elsewhere following local extinctions.

Koalas feed on a range of commonly occurring eucalypt species. They have developed complex feeding strategies to deal with the diverse toxins in the various species, usually feeding on a mix of different species. This makes it difficult for koalas to move between habitats, as this involves learning new strategies to deal with new circumstances.

The survey technique used by Chris and his team is known as the Regularised Grid Based Spot Assessment Technique, or RGBSAT. Survey sites are at one kilometre grid intersections south and west of Bermagui. Trees are examined for koala droppings and bark chews, but only very rarely are the animals themselves actually sighted. Bark chews are unique to this area, and are thought to be the result of koalas seeking supplements lacking in their regular diets.

Survey findings from Numeralla

In describing some of the study's findings, Chris concentrated on the area near Numeralla east of Cooma. This was an area proposed for controlled burning, and was brought to the EPA's attention because of reported koala road kills. In conducting the survey, Chris received very good cooperation from the local community and, in particular, from the local Rural Fire Service who were very careful in planning and executing subsequent burns. At Numeralla, it was found that Scribbly Gum (*Eucalyptus rossii*) and Brittle Gum (*E. mannifera*) were the trees most used by koalas, especially those on northerly aspects, although in particular areas Manna Gum (*E. viminalis*) was also popular.

Koalas threatened Australia-wide

So far, the study has proceeded only as far as Jerangle, east of Bredbo, and Chris is keen to see it extended northwards. All koala populations in mainland Australia are under threat, and there is more pressure than ever for burning of forest habitat. It is essential that research into the location and condition of remaining populations be continued.

At the conclusion of his presentation Chris fielded a range of questions from a very interested and concerned audience. He was warmly thanked and presented with a Namadgi book by President Rod.

Max Lawrence



Koala at Black Ridge in the Numeralla area
Photo Kevin McCue

Canberra's lake paradises

We all have enjoyed at least one of the many facilities available around Lake Burley-Griffin, but who has explored some of the other lakes Canberra now has in place? We know their purpose, which is to act as a sediment trap to ensure run-off from our city into the 'bidgee is of acceptable quality. But they look nice, too.

Wildlife galore

Sure, they are not part of our original natural heritage, and most of the species of vegetation are introduced, but they do look really photogenic and do attract a lot of bird life, especially water birds. Oh and fish too ... but we won't carp about that.

They do much to add to the quality of Canberra as a place to live and work. I'm lucky enough to live within a ten-minute walk of the shores of Lake Tuggeranong. I can't believe it is well over 20 years since it filled.

It seems only yesterday when our son came home from his and his mates' 'confidential hideout' near the swamp that emptied into Tuggeranong Creek one autumn day, saying; 'Hey dad we found four baby brown snakes near the

creek today!' 'Don't tell your Mother will you?' He did, quite recently ... family dinners can be fun, can't they?

Lake Tuggeranong and surrounds

Lake Tuggeranong is well worth a walk around – it is only a bit over six kilometres via the Erindale Drive bridge or, eight kilometres if you walk over the dam that holds back Tuggeranong Creek which feeds most of it. And you can walk further, taking in the Isabella Ponds or you could visit a small hill to the east in the middle of Oxley for a very different and still pleasant perspective.

The views are constantly changing as you walk around the well-maintained track, and the mood of the lake similarly changes with each hour and season.

Three small, well-vegetated islands – they were deliberately constructed – offer great refuges and nesting sites for water birds of all types, which now are really abundant. And there are plenty of refreshment options – including quality ones – at most within a five-minute walk from the lake shore at the south-western end.

Further south, Point Hut Pond offers a shorter walk; and although it is half

Lake Tuggeranong's age, the planted vegetation is starting to obviously mature.

The northern lakes

Apart from the really delightful walk around the quite beautiful Lake Ginninderra, both Gungahlin and Yerrabi Ponds have matured enough now to offer very pleasant walks. Indeed a walk taking in both these ponds looks well worth a try for a decent half-day walk.

I have recently visited both and they are really pleasant venues for a stroll, a picnic or just to get away from things for a bit. I think TAMS has done it well for everyone with our lakes and ponds.

It is nice to see increasing numbers of people enjoying our numerous lakes. Some of them may be easily convinced that this part of the world has much to offer, explore, enjoy and protect, and that's where we come in. So if you are looking for something different with simple logistics – try a lake near you!

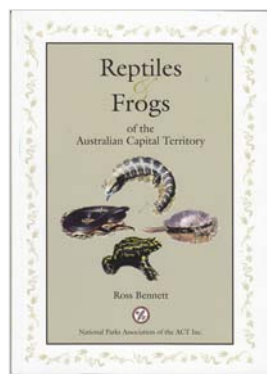
Steve Hill



Tuggeranong Lake

Photo Ed Highley

Launch of *Reptiles & Frogs* book



Top left: President Rod Griffiths doing the introduction at the Namadgi Visitor Centre (ML)

Top right: Assembly Speaker Shane Rattenbury launches the book (ML)

Middle right: Minding Ross Bennett's pet Red-bellied Black Snake is a family affair (SF)

Left: Brett McNamara, Shane Rattenbury and author Ross Bennett have a yarn after the launch (SF)

Bottom: Some of the appreciative audience looking on as the book is launched (ML)

Photos by Max Lawrence (ML) and Sabine Friedrich (SF)



NPA Christmas party 2011



Top left: Another new recruit to NPA? New committee member Bernard Morvell brought his son Daniel along to the Christmas party (SF)

Top right: Caterers Michael Goonrey, Annette Smith and Judy Kelly get into the Christmas cheer while Bernard looks on (ML)

Middle: Some bantering and bartering going on between prospective buyers on the left (ML) and auctioneers Tim Walsh and David Large on the right (SF)

Bottom: Hardy bushwalkers braved the elements on a short walk to the remains of Tennent Homestead before the Christmas party (ML)

Photos by Max Lawrence (ML) and Sabine Friedrich (SF)



Mount Gingera - our white winter icon

I love Mount Gingera – I don't know how many times I've visited it and worshiped what must be among the best sets of views of Namadgi National Park, as well as the High Country wilderness to the west and south. At 1,857 metres asl it is only a few metres lower than the revered Mount Hotham. It is always worth reminding the Mexicans of that when they start boasting ... And there is no higher mountain on the Australian continent north of Mount Gingera. I love leading walks to it's summit and I like to offer a progressive lunch as a way of exploring some of the mountain top as there is much more to it than just that southern summit.

It is so easy to get to. Indeed, in the 1960s and early 1970s you could drive into the track we now use to climb the southern peak. My parents (Audrey and Charlie Hill) took me, my sister, brother and my grandparents to that point in Dad's Morris Oxford in early 1963. We had a BBQ lunch on the side of the road where it loops back towards Snowy Flat and we 'men' climbed Gingera that afternoon. Now of course we park at the Ginini car park and walk the 7 or so kilometres in along the old Cotter Hut road. Or if you are a masochist you can climb up from Corin Dam – about a 900 metre climb in all.

Brumby Flat discovered

As I got a little adventurous during the 90s I discovered there was more to Gingera, like Brumby Flat about fifty metres below the summit to the west. And beyond that, on a little spur on the western side of Brumby Flat can be found a fabulous rock platform that brings a different perspective to the south-western views. For example, you can see bits of Coleman Gorge from there. Brumby Flat is a magical place – a high-level, frosty hollow surrounded by snow gums. Sadly, as was much of the vegetation on Gingera, its magic was damaged by the 2003 firestorm. The region was showing good signs of recovery when I last visited there, in 2009, but a clump of ancient – several centuries old – snow gums at the southern end of the flat didn't make it: the long drought and fire was too much for them. Much of the peat bog of the flat was burnt too. What does that tell us about what is happening ?

Walking with Jack Smart

Nonetheless, Brumby Flat is well worth a visit. Some readers may recall Jack Smart. One learned quickly that it was wise to engage Jack somewhat later in the walk about his passion – the latest in

existential philosophy of which he was Emeritus Professor at the Australian National University.

Jack was in his late seventies when he came on one of my walks, which was a little masochistic in that I offered the quite steep 200 plus metre climb from Pryor's Hut to the northern (1,847 m) summit, mainly because the morning views north-west and east from there were less hazy. Jack steamed up there without any drama declaring that despite all his years walking in the region, he had never done that climb and had never visited Brumby Flat. As always on my walks – chuckle – the weather was sparkingly fabulous.

I took the group from the northern summit through the snow gum scrub to the top end of Brumby Flat – finding a rock we could all sit on to take in the sounds unique to the alpine wilderness on a still day, as well as the views toward mounts Kelly, Scabby and Morgan to the south.

I asked Jack what he thought of it all. 'It's enough for me to question the fundamental principles of my atheism', he replied.

Enough said – I hope to get back there this coming autumn and maybe even be able to offer yet another walk to Gingera for the outings program.

Steve Hill



View across the Cotter from Mount Gingera north summit

Photo Max Lawrence

Book review

The Quintessential Bird: The Art of Betty Temple-Watts

Viola Temple-Watts National Library of Australia, 2011, \$34.95

This beautiful book publishes the 34 bird plates by artist Betty Temple-Watts held in the National Library of Australia. Penny Olsen writes about the 34 plates, and Betty's life story is written by her daughter-in-law Viola Temple-Watts.

The painting of Gang Gangs on the book's front cover is a fine example of the statement that Betty '... had exceptional powers of observation and a gift for capturing the quintessential nature of birds'. However, although being an art student in London during her youth, it was not until she was 48 years old that she decided to turn her artistic talent to drawing and painting birds. Having moved to Australia from New Guinea during World War II with her oil mining husband and their three children, Betty began drawing and identifying the birds of the Glenelg River area. She used the National Museum of Victoria's bird collection to help with identification. She joined the Bird Observers Club and the Royal

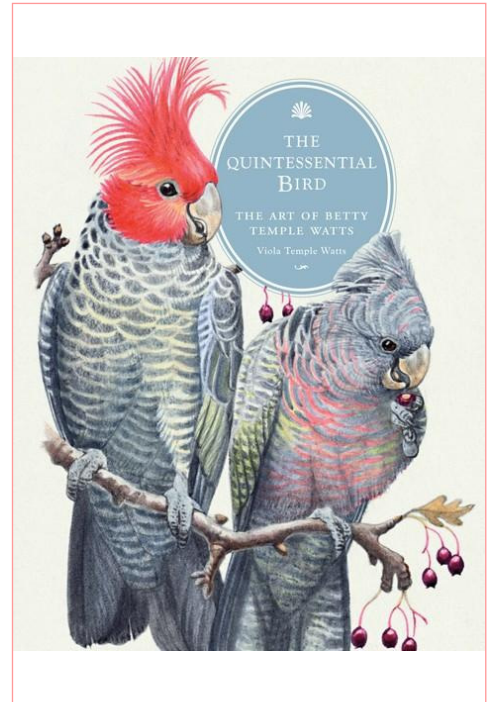
Australian Ornithologists Union, and kept drawing and drawing.

In 1952, Betty received her first commission from Warren Hitchcock to draw flight patterns of Arctic Terns for an article in the journal *Emu* written by the ornithologist Max Downes of the Antarctic Research Division.

In 1960, when the National Parks Association of the ACT was formed, Betty and family were living in Canberra. Betty became one of the Association's members, being a friend of Nancy Burbidge, the founder of NPA ACT, and being interested in the conservation of the environment.

Betty was then asked to draw and paint the illustrations for the book *Birds in the Australian High Country* edited by H.J. Frith, published in 1969 (34 plates). When she was 79 years old she painted three new plates for a revised edition. Betty also did the designs for the first full series of Australian bird stamps issued in 1964–65 and eight decimal stamps in 1966. She also painted birds for overseas and local publications.

After her husband's death, Betty moved from Canberra to Queensland



to live with her son Stephen. She joined the Queensland Ornithological Society and the Wildlife Preservation Society, and continued to enjoy the bushland and its birds until her death aged 91 years in 1992.

Fiona MacDonald Brand

Media release

CORROBOREE FROGS RELEASED INTO THE WILD FOR THE FIRST TIME

Published: November 25, 2011, 12:23 pm, Section: Simon Corbell, MLA | Media Releases

Around 200 northern corroboree frogs have been released into the wild for the very first time after eight years of breeding in captivity as part of a program to save the endangered species, Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development, Simon Corbell, announced today.

"In 2003, the ACT Government established a captive colony of the endangered northern corroboree frog at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve in response to a continuing decline of wild populations," Mr Corbell said. This release is the culmination of eight years of raising and breeding northern corroboree frogs by government ecologists and Tidbinbilla wildlife officers and represents a significant milestone for the Government in protecting this endangered species.

"There are currently around 1000 northern corroboree frogs in captivity at Tidbinbilla with evidence showing that a captive breeding program boosts the survival of eggs to adults from less than 10% in the wild to around 80% in captivity. ACT Government ecologists worked to collect eggs of corroboree frogs from the field each year since 2003 to establish a captive, disease-free population in a special facility at Tidbinbilla."

Mr Corbell said there are estimated to be less than 100 northern corroboree frogs remaining in the wild in the ACT with its decline attributed to the spread of the introduced pathogen Amphibian Chytrid Fungus, which in some cases has caused extinctions of frogs worldwide.

"I am pleased that the work of the ACT Government for this endangered species has reached this important milestone as it's another step to halt the decline and see that the corroboree frog remains in the ACT," said Minister Corbell.

The program is jointly funded by the Australian Government's Caring for our Country initiative and the ACT Government, and managed by the Conservation, Planning and Research Unit of the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate.

Mr Corbell said the frogs have been released back to the sphagnum moss bogs in Namadgi National Park.



Northern Corroboree Frog
Photo Murray Evans/ACT Government

Sherwood: report on a bushwalk

Walk: Sherwood, 11 September 2011

Participants: (6)

Brian Slee (Leader), John Kelly, Marian Hanley, Kim Hello, Margaret Power, Max Lawrence

Weather: Partly cloudy; micro-shower about noon, chilly later.

Leader's comments:

Sherwood is squeezed into a valley between Uriarra Station, Blue Range (ACT/NSW border) and Dowling trig. The homestead no longer exists but deciduous trees planted around it (the oaks are particularly impressive) have survived. Pine plantations were subsequently established on adjacent slopes. During the 1990s the NPA conducted regular walks in the valley to see the bulbs that had escaped from the settlers' garden but the walks were discontinued after much of the area was burnt in 2003 and then suffered in the long drought. However, the flowers are again flourishing. And the views are perhaps more interesting now that the pines have a diminished capacity to obscure them.

We set out from Weston Creek at 8.30 am, taking Blue Range Road off Brindabella Road, and stopped just short of Blue Range Hut. The hills were alive with numbered horse riders, mission uncertain. And bacon was sizzling at the hut, occupied by four happy campers and their fluffy dog. From there we walked on forestry roads, contouring east to West Knob Road for a panoramic sight of Tidbinbilla Range, before descending to Uriarra Creek. The 160-metre climb to Dowling trig was obvious, though there were grumbles about fences to scale. The cows munched on, regardless. From the ridge, views stretched from Stromlo to Belconnen. Morning tea was near the summit, Pig Hill side, which looked good, despite the name. Sitting, chatting. But exotics beckoned so we retraced our steps and found a path across the creek to Sherwood. It was a surprise to turn the corner and see numerous clumps of daffodils now covering the area where the homestead once stood and down to the babbling brook. Each daffodil has a double trumpet, so quite a blob of yellow, dramatised by dabs of white snowdrops and jonquils.

Grey craggy oak trunks framed the picture, surrounded by the slim lines of leafless trees and the now ubiquitous blackberries. After a quick look at the graves up the slope, lunch was declared; it tried to rain, other walking groups stopped by, a robin flashed red along fallen timber. Margaret recited verses from Wordsworth's 'Daffodils' and captured the moment. A cold wind sent us on our way, following a track marked before the fires and since partly obliterated. It took us in the direction of Blue Range Road – why it involved climbing a multi-strand fence was a mystery. Anyhow, we were soon back at the cars and back at Weston Creek before 3 pm, taking the East-West Road shortcut on the way. Some lingered for caffeine at Coffee Guru.

Good walk, worth repeating in summer when the trees canopy a green glade or late April when yellow crocuses are surrounded by autumn colour.

Brian Slee

*Flowers and colours in profusion
Photo Max Lawrence*



Snowy Mountains bushwalk

Walk: Snowy Mountains
9–10 January 2012

Participants: (9)

Brian Slee (Leader), Judith Webster, Jan Gatenby, Barrie Ridgway, Mike Bremers, Philip Gatenby, Peter Anderson-Smith, Tim Walsh, Kathy Saw

Weather: Partly cloudy, unrelenting strong winds, high wind-chill factor.

Leader's comments:

A second Snowy Mountains summer packwalk (first in 2011) aimed at climbing remote peaks in the Main Range and investigating valleys in between. Although the walk duration was reduced from three days to two, due to the weather and an injured walker, we still visited new and interesting areas at a time when the mountains were in great condition.

Day 1: After collecting bodies around Canberra before 7 am, we met Tim and Kathy at Jindabyne's lower shopping centre prior to 9 am for a (semi-legal) coffee stop. Then to deserted Guthega where we parked at Illawong track head. New work was apparent on the rise south of Farm Creek – timbered steps extending beyond the steel mesh. We were at Illawong Bridge at 11 am (signs now command single-person crossings).

Too windy for flies and almost for humans

Even the soldier beetle swarms of late December had disappeared. Nevertheless, we climbed Twynam footpad to the first blossoming snow-gum grove where we had a break. The country was as green as it gets and looked magnificent. Candle heath and eyebrights were back after quiet years and billy buttons profuse. Ants calm.

We continued up, adjacent to Twynam Creek, stopping to chat to a couple whose tent was at Illawong, before turning right at another fine snow-gum grove to climb steeply onto a ridge heading north, in front of Anton. Remnant snow on way. We were still on our feet but the wind encouraged an early descent to Pounds Creek for lunch. Anton-Anderson saddle, the planned campsite, would be too exposed so we moved about 100 metres downstream to the creek bend to spread out in a field of daisies and billy buttons. Breezy, but delightful location with gurgling water.

Abundant wildflowers and a hovering kestrel

In the afternoon six ventured north for a two-hour excursion, veering left on Anderson West Ridge to its peak of ~1,940 m and the prominent rock north of there, owned by skiers in winter. Notable views of Tate and Anton plus the drama of Watsons Crag. Abundant wildflowers and a hovering kestrel delayed our departure, despite the gusts. In our absence, Tim had a bath, brrr.

We huddled over dinner and Judith recited her Tasmanian bushwalking poem while the sun slid behind Anton; numbing with cold we were soon tented for an early night.

Day 2: Alpine grass made comfy mattresses, a full moon cast fleeting silver light, there was a pink-sky dawn. But the wind persisted and flapping flysheets had disturbed sleep; Kathy's tent was ready to die.

A panoramic snow gum promontory, lovely, lingering

We would not be camping, as planned, in the same place that night as we had an injured, but mobile, walker and we needed to move closer to civilisation. Some scope remained to walk in areas east of the Range. After a sortie to the nearby waterfall we departed at 9 am, contouring north-east to a creek parallel to Pounds and then followed 'Gills Knobs' Creek to its junction with Pounds, as in 2011. On the way we diverted to a panoramic snow gum

promontory. Lovely, lingering. Philip discovered a blue plastic barrel full of supplies from last August, of which bottles of scotch and vodka had been consumed but little else. Springtails massed on the dark side of a dead limb.

Pounds Creek waterfalls

On reaching Pounds Creek, three continued to the vehicles while the rest dumped packs and turned upstream to investigate waterfalls. We scrambled and rock-hopped for a kilometre – it was like a windtunnel – to within a short distance of the falls visited earlier in the morning and found two sets. None shown on maps. We lunched at the lowest falls, which looked neatly man-made, like a slippery dip.

Peter and Mike led us back through heath and mint bush to the packs. After a routine walk via Illawong, everyone met back at Guthega at 2.15 pm. The leader had taken a poo tube from which (neatly wrapped) packages were deposited in Island Bend pit toilet – thus ending droll poo jokes.

Seven of us stopped at Jindabyne for calorific rewards and were back home before 6 pm. For those who thought the 'average speed' safety camera between Cooma and Bredbo applied to cars, not yet.

Snowed next day so with wind chill, maybe best avoided. January 2013: Camp below Twynam and investigate Twynam Creek, Watsons Crag and Siren Song Creek. Blue skies, still air, eh?

Brian Slee

Candle heath and burnt snow gums

Photo Brian Slee



West Belconnen: bushwalk report

Walk: West Belconnen,
20 November 2011

Participants: (3)

Brian Slee (Leader), Fengxia Zhou, Max Lawrence

Weather: Cloudy, humid, chilly wind at times, occasional sprinkles.

Leader's comments:

We met at 8.30 am at Clode Place, Macgregor and, despite the weather, decided to give it a go, crossing Ginninderra Creek by footbridge and heading north on the bike path toward the NSW border. As it was a good day for ducks, we were not surprised to find them at Jaramlee and Fassifern Ponds before traipsing through high grass and climbing a couple of fences to get to West Belconnen Pond. A waterfowl paradise, with island refuges. One white duck and an elegant egret amid the black multitude. Humans mostly cosily at home. A sign points to Surveyor Hill in NSW and explains the history of surveying in the area.

Onward through Dunlop Grasslands which are being grazed by cattle (no llama). Maybe it was the dung but the flies were particularly annoying. We were heading east to Binns Street, Fraser, site of a Southwell family soldier-settler farm, where we had a break. Magpies cadged but got nothing.

The final stretch of grassland took us to our only major road crossing, Tillyard Drive, from where we followed lanes up to Mt Rogers carpark and then through bush to the summit. No Superb Parrots but quite a view in gloomy light. It was early for lunch but we gulped it down as a weather change seemed imminent.

As we descended south, drenching rain was sweeping across the city but it decided to leave us alone. One moment of comfort. We exited via Schwarz Place into Flynn from whence we walked on bike paths, passing under Spalding and Bingle streets, Companion Crescent and Ginninderra Drive to reach Ginninderra Creek in Latham. What a treasure these trans-suburban paths are – allowing one

to appreciate the vast area of public open space in Canberra. Fengxia kept track of us on her iPhone's remarkable GPS.

At Umbagog District Park, Max had us searching for Aboriginal rock grooves but none were found. Crack willows have gone from the creek but privet was boldly in flower. We were soon back in Macgregor and at the cars at 1.15 pm.

Worth repeating, with a later start, on a nice winter day. Maybe set out from Kippax Fair, Holt, which is easier to find, and perhaps has a coffee shop for afters.

Brian Slee



View across West Belconnen Pond to One Tree Hill

Photo Max Lawrence

PARKWATCH

The history of military activity at Tianjara Plateau

The management of the former Tianjara military training area, now in Morton National Park, has been the subject of ongoing discussion between the NPWS South Coast Region and members of the public to ensure safe visitor use. To assist, the NPA Park Management Committee has recently completed an investigation into its history and a detailed report has now been provided by NPA (NSW) to the NPWS for their consideration. The study examined official records, along with community consultation, and has thrown new light on the military use of Tianjara.

In 2007 the NPWS South Coast Region released the Budawangs Bushwalking and Camping Strategy. A key consideration was the management of the former training area. At the time, a risk assessment was conducted to determine if there was a basis for concern from unexploded ordnance (UXO) remaining after years of military activity. The assessment confirmed risks associated with the northern part of the range, which had been the area of highest impact (HIA) for the larger artillery. The use of the southern part of the range was less conclusive due to lack of information about the history of its use.

In 1942 the Commonwealth had leased land surrounding the headwaters of the Clyde Gorge as a Permissive Occupancy Agreement. The range occupied approx 13,000 ha of the upper Clyde River catchment. During the war years 1943–45 the range was used frequently for artillery and mortar shooting. After WWII it remained a key training area for the term of the lease, which continued until the early 1980s. This included live firing training for regular army, reserve and national service units. During the late 1970s the range was also used for low-flying exercises firing live rockets. When the lease to the Commonwealth expired, the land of the former range was included into Morton National Park and much of it is now part of the declared Budawang Wilderness. The research has revealed a number of important management considerations:

- heavy artillery use of the HIA and the very arbitrary nature of its boundary
- weaponry used and the occurrence of UXO from overshooting and ricochets
- importance of defining the northern HIA as the most suspect, but also the

southern areas which, although not subject to direct artillery training activity, could be harbouring UXO from overshooting etc.

- joint infantry exercises south of Little Forest using live mortars
- potential for UXO to be present and therefore a continuing risk to the public
- locations outside the range from where firing took place.

The report also highlights the conflicts arising from such diametrically opposed uses; from artillery range to an area managed as 'Wilderness' for self-reliant recreation. Why was this never questioned? Management of natural areas is always complex even without the layer of events that have occurred at Tianjara. By providing a clearer picture of the history of this use then it is hoped that an appreciation may unfold of why caution as a 'duty of care' by NPWS is essential.

Nature NSW Vol. 55, No. 5 (2011)

The Gardens of Stone

The area known as The Gardens of Stone, in the western Blue Mountains, NSW, has been widely recognised by environment groups for many years as an iconic area to be protected. It is an area of outstanding natural values. These values were first noted in 1934 by Milo Dunphy and are the inspiration for research by the likes of Charles Darwin. It is promoted internationally by tourist operators as 'stunning, pristine and unforgettable'.

In 1983, environment groups began advancing the 40,000 ha Gardens of Stone 2 reserve proposal (GoS2). The reserve is tabled to stretch over 75 km from Medlow Bath to Newnes Plateau; its objective is to achieve better management and protection of this area's natural and cultural values. At present, there is much community and political interest in the area due to a controversial application. Coalpac Pty Ltd seeks to expand open-cut mining into 1,088 ha of the Ben Bullen State Forest, a forest being called in for reservation as a matter of priority. Opponents to the 'Coalpac Consolidation Project' include the NSW Labor Party, Lithgow City Council, the Nature Conservation Council of NSW, the Greens and the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Advisory Committee.

Ben Bullen State Forest takes in 9,456 ha of primarily old-growth forest and wildlife habitat, along with montane heaths and peat swamps. It boasts the same natural beauty as the adjoining

Gardens of Stone NP and the nearby Blue Mountains Heritage Area and Wollemi NP. In August 2011 the NSW Minister for Environment, Robyn Parker, wrote to environment groups to inform them that a review of the GoS2 proposal was underway. This news was received with great thanks and appreciation. It is noted, however, that until the review is finished and the area is completely reserved there is still a great and real threat to the forest.

Environment groups fear that, if the NSW Government approves the 'Coalpac Consolidation Project', this would set a destructive and irreversible precedent that will see large sections of the GoS2 proposal area carved up by mining companies, leaving it to resemble more the dust bowls of the Upper Hunter than a 'stunning and pristine' place for people around the world to visit.

Nature NSW Vol. 55, No. 5 (2011)

Phillip Island Nature Parks tops Banksia awards

Phillip Island Nature Parks took first place in the 'Land Biodiversity – Preserving Our Ecosystems' category in this year's nationwide Banksia environmental awards. The Nature Parks' submission, titled 'Fox Free Phillip Island', tells the story of the island's fox eradication program. No penguins have been killed by foxes in the colony for two years running.

Since the introduction of foxes to Phillip Island in the early 1900s, 9 of 10 Little Penguin colonies have been lost. The Nature Parks program, begun in 2007, has significantly reduced the fox threat to the remaining Summerland Peninsula colony and to other island species like Hooded Plovers and Short-tailed Shearwaters.

Park Watch VNPA No. 247 Dec 2011

STOP PRESS

Due to damage done to roads, tracks and bridges (photo: Naas Road bridge over Gudgeby River) scheduled walks and work parties might have to be cancelled. Please check!



PARKWATCH (continued)

Alpine parks need real money

Everyone, it seems, is after a slice of the Alpine National Park. The tourism industry wants to develop high-end tourism packages, the cattlemen want their grazing licences back, cyclists and horse riders call for greater access, and bushwalkers want the place 'unspoilt' for themselves. But what do the natural systems of the Alps need? They need money, resources and expertise to deal with a range of threats that have been growing over the years. A recent, though somewhat buried report, makes this very clear.

In July 2009, the Australian Alps Liaison Committee commissioned a report on the health of the alpine catchments. The report was completed in June 2010 but hasn't been released – not even to members of Victoria's Alpine Advisory Committee set up to give advice on a new Alpine National Park management plan. It was only a much-abbreviated 'summary report for policy makers' that was eventually released in mid 2011, by the Federal Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency. Both the original report and the summary make it clear that there are serious management problems: 17% of the 235 identified Alps sub-catchments are significantly affected by introduced animals, and 13% are seriously invaded by weeds.

Not surprisingly the main culprits are feral horses and deer, and weeds like broom, willows, blackberries and hawkweeds. But frequent fire, management tracks, developments and visitor use are also affecting the health of alpine catchments. You have to go to the original, buried technical report to discover the scale of the remedy. That report asks for around \$100 million over the next 15 years.

The feral horse problem needs around \$1 million annually. We will need to

invest the same amount to deal with the various invasive broom species, and another million for blackberries. Deer will take an initial \$500,000 a year, but that will have to be reassessed after 5 years. Hawkweeds will swallow \$600,000 a year, and willows will take \$1.5 million annually.

This is a large investment, but it will be money well spent. The report makes it clear that, if only to protect our important catchments, such a 'whole-of-Alps, large-scale adaptive management response to climate change' would 'significantly benefit the national economy'. And it will also help conserve Australia's outstanding National Heritage listed alpine areas. So far there has been no commitment from state, territory or federal governments.

Park Watch VNPA No. 247 Dec 2011

Fire: 5% goes feral

When the Bushfires Royal Commission made its recommendation for an annual fuel-reduction burn target of 5% of Victoria's public land, it was acting against the advice of its own expert panel. Such a simplistic statewide target, panel members said, was not called for and would produce perverse results. The 5% figure actually came from a previous investigation, the 2008 Victorian parliamentary inquiry after the 2006–07 fires, and was not based on any informed assessment of Victoria's needs. Rather, it drew on three scientific papers, one from the south-western corner of WA, one from the USA, and one based on the Button Grass plains of Tasmania.

Now, barely a year after the release of the Royal Commission's report, versions of the 5% target are being adopted in NSW and SA, and being considered in Tasmania. No wonder, then, that a group of scientists and land managers from all

of Australia's states and territories met in Healesville in November for a workshop on the ecological monitoring of planned burning. The workshop, organised by the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE), was prompted by another recommendation of Victoria's Royal Commission.

Recommendation 58 states that DSE should 'significantly upgrade its program of long-term data collection to monitor and model the effects of its prescribed burning programs and of bushfires on biodiversity in Victoria'.

Clearly, land managers see fire management as one of the great ecological challenges of our time. And clearly, too, they recognise the need for a science-based solution if they are to handle the range of opinions and pressure coming from all sections of the community. The workshop explored a large range of issues that could usefully be dealt with at a national level, such as information systems, knowledge sharing and fire mapping. A report on the final recommendations will be prepared by the organising group. Clearly, all states agree that there is much to be done in this regard.

Park Watch VNPA No. 247 Dec 2011

Murray–Darling Basin Plan update

By the time you receive this Parkwatch, the much-anticipated draft Murray–Darling Basin Plan should have been released. Comments, feedback and submissions will be sought until around the end of February 2012.

The VNPA recently joined other conservation groups, landholders and community members from across the Murray–Darling Basin for a roundtable meeting in Canberra with federal Environment and Water minister Tony

NEW BOOK: *The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines Made Australia* by Bill Gammage

In this new book, Canberra historian Bill Gammage brings a whole new perspective to the issue of fire and the Australian landscape. The following is the publisher's description of the book. It is hoped to have a review of the book in a forthcoming edition of the Bulletin.

Explodes the myth that pre-settlement Australia was an untamed wilderness revealing the complex, country-wide systems of land management used by Aboriginal people.

Across Australia, early Europeans commented again and again that the land looked like a park. With extensive grassy patches and pathways, open woodlands and abundant wildlife, it evoked a country estate in England. Bill Gammage has discovered this was because Aboriginal people managed the land in a far more systematic and scientific fashion than we have ever realised.

For over a decade, Gammage has examined written and visual records of the Australian landscape. He has uncovered an extraordinarily complex system of land management using fire and the life cycles of native plants to ensure plentiful wildlife and plant foods throughout the year. We know Aboriginal people spent far less time and effort than Europeans in securing food and shelter, and now we know how they did it.

*With details of land-management strategies from around Australia, *The Biggest Estate on Earth* rewrites the history of this continent, with huge implications for us today. Once Aboriginal people were no longer able to tend their country, it became overgrown and vulnerable to the hugely damaging bushfires we now experience. And what we think of as virgin bush in a national park is nothing of the kind.*

PARKWATCH (continued)

Burke. At the meeting, the VNPA and other voices from across three states expressed concerns at the direction in which the MDBA appears to be heading. Leaked reports have disclosed that the draft plan will seek to recover far less water than scientists say the rivers and wetlands need. Victoria's northern river and new red gum national parks risk a slow death if the final plan fails to deliver enough water.

It's worth remembering that there is \$10 billion already set aside to fix the problem by recovering water for rivers, wetlands and national parks. The VNPA website will be updated once the draft plan is released, helping you have your say to make sure the Gillard government delivers on its promise to fix the return of water to our ailing rivers, and commits to a strong science-based plan that will recover at least 4,000 billion litres of water/year for the environment.

Park Watch VNPA No. 247 Dec 2011

Importation of the Silver Fox into Australia

The Nature Conservation Society of SA has provided comment to the Federal Wildlife Trade Section on an application to import the Silver Fox *Vulpes vulpes* into Australia to be kept as a domestic pet.

We, along with a range of other environmental organisations around Australia, condemned the application due to the high risk of the domesticated animals escaping and breeding with feral populations of Red Foxes. This is highly likely to occur as the Silver Fox and the Red Fox are in fact the same species and therefore could successfully breed to dramatically increase the feral population. Considering the huge sums of money that are being spent Australia wide to control the ecological impacts of foxes the application to import Silver Fox seems nothing less than madness.

Xanthopus Vol. 29, Part 3 (2011)

Firewood decision an attack on our parks

The VNPA is deeply alarmed at the Baillieu government's recent decision to amend Victoria's national parks legislation to allow firewood collection in national parks along the Murray River.

A letter from Victorian Environment Minister Ryan Smith to the VNPA in September confirmed that the National Parks Act (1975) would be amended to allow firewood collection to continue in Barmah and Gunbower national parks. This decision is unprecedented in Victoria. No government has ever moved to

weaken or undermine legislation that protects our national parks estate. It sets a grave precedent that could lead to further weakening of Victoria's national parks legislation. Any move to undermine the integrity of our parks should be of deep concern to all. Parks are special places created to protect nature, not to be used as firewood depots or cow paddocks. This 'firewood' is not just a resource for people, but a vital habitat for plants, mammals, reptiles, birds and invertebrates.

There is no need to allow the taking of firewood from national parks. Farmers and other tree growers in northern Victoria have hundreds of tonnes of plantation-grown firewood available to sell. The State Government's decision is not only anti-conservation, it is anti-farm forestry and anti-competitive. The VNPA and other conservation groups worked for almost 20 years to get proper protection for our magnificent red gum forests, which were declared national parks in 2010. We are also concerned that commitments to declare the Murray River parks, smaller reserves along the Murray outside the main national parks, will be in jeopardy if changes to legislation are proposed or implemented.

Nature's Voice VNPA Newsletter No. 10

Oct-Nov 2011

Bike riding in national parks

NPA NSW wishes to emphasise that the first consideration in the deliberations on bike riding in national parks must be the conservation of biodiversity in accordance with IUCN principles and the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Act. National parks are a distinctive type of public land tenure that must be managed in a way that reflects their specific purpose of nature conservation.

NPA encourages cycling as a form of recreation and transport. However, the environmental impacts of cycling vary depending on how and where they are undertaken and how they are managed. Cycling in national parks is an entirely appropriate activity on all public, ministerial, park and management roads outside of wilderness areas and on particular access tracks where specified in a Plan of Management. Such cycling, providing it is respectful of the environment and other users, is an opportunity to appreciate the natural values provided by the reserve, while at the same time enjoying healthy exercise. It is NPA's long-held view that permitting cycling in other areas is problematic due to the potential negative impacts on both nature and other park users.

However, we concede that recent research published in New Zealand on the results of a 3-year trial of bike riding in the Arthur's Pass National Park indicated that mountain bike riding had neither a biophysical impact on the route, nor significant social impact on traditional users. Similarly, NPWS argues that their strategy aims to reduce the proliferation of illegal bike tracks cut by a small percentage of bike riders by providing a small number of purpose-built bike trails that are subject to environmental assessment, and only if approved in the plans of management for the host park itself. NPA will monitor the trial closely, providing feedback to our members and NPWS on our assessment.

Nature NSW Vol. 55, No. 5 (2011)

Alps snow no show by 2050

Recent media comments on 'Caring for our Australian Alps Catchments', a report released by the federal Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency, highlight predictions of greatly reduced snow in the Alps by 2050. The background document (which has not been officially released) has much more to say. It recommends that \$100 million be invested in management of the Australian Alps National Parks over the next 15 years. Most of that, say the authors, should be dedicated to pest plant and animal management, especially feral horses, deer, willows, hawkweeds and broom.

Nature's Voice VNPA No. 10

(Oct-Nov 2011)

Environmental award: Snowy Rehabilitation

The 2011 Engineering Excellence award for environmental engineering went to the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service for Snowy Scheme site rehabilitation in Kosciuszko National Park.

There are 386 disturbed sites, 36 of them requiring major work, the remaining 350 requiring minimal engineering work. The work began in 2003 and so far more than 650,000 trees have been planted (remember when Bob Hawke promised to plant 1,000,000 trees and no one believed him) and hundreds of thousands of cubic metres of earth and rock have been moved to stabilise the sites. The cost, being met by Snowy Hydro, is \$18m to date and the program is expected to run for another 10 years.

Engineers Australia, Civil Edition,

Vol. 83, No. 12 Dec 2011

submitted by Kevin McCue

Compiled by Hazel Rath

NPA notices



New members of the association

The NPA ACT welcomes the following new members:

Rowena Headlam
 Susan & Richard Holz
 Anne Corbett
 Yuhua Shi & Alan Gascoyne
 Kim Johnston
 Cynthia Coppock

We look forward to seeing everyone at NPA activities.

National Parks Association Calendar				
	March	April	May	June
Public holidays	Mon 12	Fri 6-Mon 9 Wed 25		Mon 11
General meetings	Thur 15	Thur 19	Thur 17	Thur 21
Committee meetings	Tues 6	Tues 3	Tues 1	Tues 5
Gudgeny Bush Regeneration ¹	Sat 10	Sat 14	Sat 12	Sat 9
Further details: 1. GBRG. Meet Namadgi Visitor Centre, 9:15am or Yankee Hat car park 10:00am				

This *Bulletin* was prepared by Editor: Max Lawrence, Sub-editor: Ed Highley, Presentation: Sonja Lenz and Adrienne Nicholson

Check out our website!

<http://www.npaact.org.au>



Our webmaster Chris Emery ensures the NPA website is a veritable mine of information

Find out all about:

- who we are
- what our policies are
- our publications and how to order them
- our history, including ability to download *NPA Bulletins* going back to 1963 (except for the last two years)
- what is on, including details of forthcoming outings, work parties, meetings, etc
- links to other conservation and walking groups, relevant government agencies, etc
- NPA podcasts
- extensive photo galleries of national parks and reserves, wildlife, NPA outings and activities and much more
- access to the latest media releases and reports of interest to NPA
- how to join NPA
- how to make a bequest to NPA ACT

Note that members are also eligible to receive our regular monthly email newsletter *Burning Issues*, which keeps everyone right up to date on the latest hot topics and issues.

Honorary Life Membership



The committee is calling for nominations for Honorary Life Membership.

If you think that a member has done some extraordinary work for our association and is worthy of this recognition, please send a *confidential* nomination in by mid-April, addressed to our Secretary.

Further information on what to put into the nomination can be found on the NPA website or by contacting Kevin McCue on 6251 1291 or mccue.kevin@gmail.com.

Cover photographs

Front cover

Main photo. The author Ross Bennett and his pet Red-bellied Black Snake at the launch of the reprinted *Reptiles & Frogs at Namadgi Visitor Centre* (more photos page 12)

Insets. Top Map of proposed national park (article page 2-3)

Centre Martin Chalk taking water measurements (article page 8-9)

Right Shane Rattenbury launches *Reptiles & Frogs* (see page 12)

Photos Max Lawrence

Back cover

Murrumbidgee River Outflow – Gulf Plain

Photo Martin Chalk

General Meetings

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



Thursday 15 March

Floral and coastal wonders of the southern Bibbelmun Track

David and Judy Kelly
NPA members

Dave and Judy will talk about and show the floral and coastal wonders of the southern Bibbelmun Track, between Walpole and Albany where they walked with three other NPA stalwarts in November 2011. After prolific rains the flowers were abundant. Dave and Judy will also talk about side trips to the Stirling Range and Fitzgerald River national parks.

Thursday 19 April

What's happening in Namadgi?

Brett McNamara
Manager, Rural District
Territory and Municipal Services

Things don't stand still in Namadgi National Park. Regeneration, 12 months of above-average rainfall and associated storms, bushfire fuel reduction, research and pests, large and small, Brett will bring us up to date.

Thursday 17 May

Engaging with NPA members

Clare Henderson
Director, ConsACT

As the new Director of the Conservation Council Clare is keen to meet members of affiliated organisations. Clare would like to hear members' views on what they believe are the key elements of the proposal for a new national park based on the ACT threatened lowland grassy woodlands. Also, with an ACT election taking place in October 2012, what issues should ConsACT be pressing prospective Assembly Members to support?

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	
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<i>Treasurer</i>	Chris Emery	6249 7604 (h)
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<i>Publications Sub-committee</i>	Kevin McCue	6251 1291 (h)
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<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.

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Subscription rates (1 July to 30 June)

Household membership	\$44	Single members	\$38.50
Corporate membership	\$33	<i>Bulletin</i> only	\$33
Full-time student/Pensioner	\$22		

All 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 BluePackets.

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, or the postal address above.

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