



NPA *Bulletin*

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National Parks Association of the Australian Capital Territory Inc.



Work party at Max and Berts



Feral horse review



Walk to Goandra and Witses

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

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|--|
| From the President2 <i>Rod Griffiths</i> | Dieback pathogen found in Kosciuszko NP12 <i>Allan Sharp</i> |
| NPA ACT submission to the Review of the Wild Horse3 Management Plan for Kosciuszko National Park <i>Annette Smith and Rod Griffiths</i> | History of nature conservation in the ACT13 <i>Max Lawrence</i> |
| The secret life of our president4 <i>Martin Chalk</i> | Evaluating Supplementary Pest Control14 <i>Graham Scully</i> |
| NPWS review of Kosciuszko's feral horses.....5 <i>Max Lawrence</i> | Car camp at Meroo Point14 <i>Di Thompson</i> |
| Vale Audrey Hill.....6 <i>Steve Hill</i> | Walking the Freycinet Peninsula circuit15 <i>Ed Highley</i> |
| Report on the survey of NPA members7 <i>Graham Scully and Sonja Lenz</i> | Bettongs and little critters16 <i>Helen Scully</i> |
| Max and Berts Hut work party8 <i>Philip Gatenby</i> | All-terrain access to our Bush Capital17 <i>Brett McNamara</i> |
| Glenburn gazettal another step closer8 <i>Col McAlister</i> | Book review. <i>Photographic Guide to Native Plants of the ACT</i> by Meredith Cosgrove <i>Sonja Lenz</i> |
| Walking the Westmoreland Way 2014 (part 2).....9 <i>Timothy Walsh</i> | PARKWATCH19 <i>Compiled by Hazel Rath</i> |
| Bushwalks. Gooandra and Witses huts10 <i>Brian Slee</i> | ABC on the High Country21 <i>Fiona MacDonald Brand</i> |
| Mt Tennent10 <i>Brian Slee</i> | NPA notices.....22 |
| Mt Twynam11 <i>Brian Slee</i> | Meetings and speaker information.....23 |
| | NPA information and contacts23 |

From the President

I heard recently that Essex University in the UK had been undertaking studies on the effect of the environment on mental health. The studies found that exercise in any location had positive effects for participants but the benefit came when people exercised in a well-maintained natural environment. Interestingly, the mental health benefit of exercising in a heavily polluted environment was less than exercising in a room with blank walls!

These findings emphasise the importance to humanity of a healthy natural environment, and demonstrate the positive contribution that well-maintained national parks and nature reserves have for society. Certainly, the many recreational users of the ACT reserve system and, in particular, Canberra Nature Park, appear to benefit from no part of urban Canberra being far from the natural environment. The NPA ACT has welcomed sustainable community interaction with the natural environment as a means of building support for the ongoing protection of the ACT's ecosystems. The NPA ACT has, however, regularly called for the development of an outdoor recreation strategy that will help protect our reserves from being 'loved to death'. Such a strategy is vital for ensuring that users have access to recreational opportunities across the ACT without destroying the environmental values of our reserves.

Benefits like those on mental health and general wellbeing provided by reserves are often overlooked by people seeking to develop reserves for financial purposes. Across Australia, there are regular calls to open reserves for development, the most recent in Tasmania, where proposals to develop the south-west wilderness heritage area threaten to damage the

very concept of wilderness. Here in the ACT we are fortunate that Namadgi's plan of management strongly supports the wilderness concept. Here again is another example of reserves paying their way. The wilderness areas in the ACT ensure that Canberra has some of the best drinking water in Australia and the purity of this source water ensures that treatment costs are relatively low.

The ACT community already gains great benefits from our reserve system, belying any need for inappropriate development.

On a totally different subject, I wonder how many readers know all the various ways the NPA ACT communicates with its members and supporters. First and foremost is the quarterly *Bulletin*, produced in both hard copy and electronic formats. There is also a monthly e-bulletin *Burning Issues* that provides subscribers with more frequent updates on events and emerging issues. The NPA ACT also maintains a web page and a Facebook page. All these media provide supporters with different views on the range of issues involving the NPA ACT and the natural environment and I encourage our members and supporters to subscribe, logon, share and like all the NPA ACT's means of communication. See the inside back cover of the *Bulletin* for contact details.

Best wishes.



Rod Griffiths

NPA ACT submission to the Review of the Wild Horse Management Plan for Kosciuszko National Park



On 13 June 2013, former NSW Environment Minister Robyn Parker announced that the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) would conduct an examination of horse controls in Kosciuszko National Park (KNP), saying:

'the current horse management plan was drafted in 2008 and had not kept pace with horse breeding rates. ... The best and most recent research, collected using the most rigorous methodology, will underpin future policy.'

Public engagement

The review commenced in May 2014 with a public engagement process. The initial stages of this process included meetings and workshops with some stakeholders, followed by focus groups and a telephone survey. Astonishingly, environmental groups were NOT included as stakeholders.

An 'online conversation' conducted by the Office of Environment and Heritage (July to December 2014) was open to all parties for comment on a number of topics, including park values, and management of and experiences with feral horses. By the end, views seemed just as polarised as at the beginning. (See engage.environment.nsw.gov.au.)

On 29 November 2014, a 21st Century Town Hall Meeting was held at Queanbeyan to gauge the opinions of people who had not been involved to date, and who didn't have any strong opinion on horse management in KNP. Seventy-two randomly selected, demographically representative partici-

pants from areas surrounding KNP were shown videos from a variety of viewpoints before voting on a set of questions, the majority being related to culling methods. The unofficial voting results were circulated to NPA members in December 2014.

The Independent Technical Reference Group (ITRG)

In this process, a group of senior scientists has been asked to provide technical advice to NPWS on the management of wild horses within KNP based on independent and rigorous scientific evidence and observations. ITRG group members have expertise in the native flora and fauna of the Australian Alps; horse ecology and population control; animal welfare and veterinary science; soil processes and erosion; and biostatistics.

The ITRG has been asked to:

1. review the available information on wild horse numbers and distribution in KNP and their impact on park values
2. provide advice on the most effective, humane and appropriate methods potentially available to control the wild horse population
3. provide advice on the management of wild horses across the park landscape, including setting targets for population numbers to provide for protection of natural and cultural values in the park.

NPA ACT's case to the ITRG

In late March 2015, the NPA ACT took the opportunity to prepare a written submission and to make a 20-minute oral

presentation to the ITRG. This was supported by a short PowerPoint presentation providing graphic evidence of the damage caused by feral horses in KNP, prepared by Annette Smith and Esther Gallant.

The NPA ACT president, Rod Griffiths, addressed the panel and welcomed the opportunity that the ITRG represented for science-based decision-making on the management of feral horses in KNP. He went on to describe how NPA members are frequent visitors to KNP and have become increasingly concerned about regular sightings of feral horses. These concerns are based on the obvious environmental degradation of areas where feral horses are found.

The impact of feral horses in KNP on the ACT was also drawn to the ITRG's attention. The passes on the ACT border with KNP provide relatively easy access for horses to environmentally sensitive areas in the ACT's pristine Cotter catchment. The subsequent control of these feral horses in the ACT puts an unwarranted stress on the limited resources of the ACT Parks and Conservation Service.

Rod's presentation referenced research that was showing significant annual growth in feral horse numbers in KNP, particularly in the north of the park, where a 17 per cent annual increase has been identified. These increases are despite significant NPWS resources being allocated to feral horse control.

Rod identified that feral pest management works best when a range

(continued at foot of page 4)



Habitat destruction (left) outside fenced-off areas at Cowombat Flat; and habitat preservation (right) within fenced areas at Cowombat Flat.

Photos from NPA's audiovisual presentation by Annette Smith.

Other photos of damage can be viewed on <https://www.flickr.com/photos/91914657@N08/sets>

The secret life of our president



In the March 2015 issue of the *Bulletin* I reported on the success of our association's work parties. I also mentioned in that report that our president had been undertaking some solo pine control in the Lower Cotter near Mount MacDonald.

Rod has persisted in this labour of love (?) and in February he stencilled his 1,000th pine on the handle of his saw. Had he been a fighter pilot of old, such a tally would have guaranteed medals, promotion and much more. Alas, Rod will have to be content with this humble but sincere written recognition of his determination and commitment.

Martin Chalk
Work Party Co-ordinator



Rod's 1,000th pine wilding. Photos by Martin Chalk

NPA submission to the Review of the Wild Horse Management Plan for KNP *(continued from page 3)*

of control measures are available for use by land managers. However, in the case of KNP only one control measure has been agreed to by all stakeholders. This is the very expensive method of capture and transport out of KNP, a process that in its best year removed only about 660 horses. Yet the NPWS has estimated that over 1,300 horses per annum need to be removed just to stop growth of the current population of at least 6,000 feral horses.

He expressed the dismay of the NPA ACT at the NSW Government's decision to exclude certain control techniques even before the consultation and research phases of the development of the feral horse management plan have been completed.

Walkers are major users of KNP, but horses are reducing their enjoyment of the park. The association conducts around a dozen outings each year to KNP. Members are concerned about the environmental impacts of horses, as well as the aesthetic, health and safety consequences of their presence.

Despite the idyllic photos adorning the Australian Alps Walking Track (AAWT) brochure, the reality is that walkers of this track are likely to encounter numerous mobs of 8–12 feral horses, and occasional night-time stampedes only metres from tents, frightening not just humans but also

ground-nesters such as Masked Lapwings. Even in daytime, feral horses have intimidated walkers. It was noted that during Esther's walking on the AAWT she had seen no marsupials in KNP, but in the ACT, where horses are controlled, kangaroos were commonly sighted.

Many plant species are at risk, including an endangered Leek Orchid. In addition to the tracks they have created, the horses use walking tracks and fire trails, leaving large piles of horse dung walkers or bike riders have to negotiate around. The smell is pervasive, overpowering the fragrance of the eucalypt forest.

Streams are churned into bogs. An image of an all too common, badly bogged stream was the backdrop to discuss the quality of drinking water available to walkers. Worries about *Escherichia coli* infection have been overtaken by the risk of ingesting giardia and/or cryptosporidium. These are shed in the faeces of large animals, and cause severe and potentially long-lasting gastrointestinal distress. Visitors have to treat their water by carrying extra fuel to boil the water, carry a filter or steripen, or treat it with chlorine dioxide.

The area from the source of the Murray River to Cowombat Flat on the NSW/Victoria border was used to illustrate the dramatic difference the

horses have made to valley landscapes, particularly the streams. Google images show that experimental plots that were fenced over 16 years ago are well grassed along a narrow stream. Outside the fence, where horses can walk, the stream has become a wide bog. The impact is not just visual. The audiovisual revealed that the fenced-off areas were alive with frog calls, but a few metres away in the unfenced area there was silence. The absence of frogs extended for the 3 km upstream to the source of the Murray. Other photos showed how horses are taking the softest ground walking from one sphagnum bog or pond to the next. This is creating channels that are draining ponds, sphagnum bogs and valley floors.

A plea was made to believe the science and decide in favour of protection of native flora and fauna.

The NPA's submission to the ITRG can be viewed on the Association's website under Policies/Submissions. The audiovisual can be viewed on <http://tinyurl.com/qxnu285>.

Annette Smith and Rod Griffiths

NPWS review of Kosciuszko's feral horses

The story as told by Rob Gibbs

Rob Gibbs, as the NPWS Senior Project Officer charged with responsibility for the review of the management of feral horses in Kosciuszko National Park (KNP), must have one of the most difficult and unenviable jobs in Australia, if not the world. On one hand he has to protect the natural ecosystems in the park from damage caused by rapidly rising numbers of feral horses, but he has to do this with the other hand tied behind his back. Having to deal with both environmentalists and so-called 'horse lovers', he must often feel like the meat in the sandwich.

In February it was the ACT environmentalists' turn. Rob came along as guest speaker at our general meeting and, during the same week, he also addressed a meeting of the Canberra Bushwalking Club.

The Guy Fawkes incident

At our NPA meeting Rob opened by telling us something of his background. He started as an NPWS ranger in KNP around 25 years ago, leading walks to Kosciuszko's summit. In those days (early 1990s) wild horses were not seen to be much of a problem in KNP. He then moved to Barrington Tops NP, where there were more horses. Then there was Guy Fawkes River NP, where 606 horses were euthanised over three days by aerial shooting following a bushfire. And that is when 'all hell broke loose'. A regrettable knee-jerk reaction from the then NSW Minister for the Environment and it was all over for aerial shooting of horses, and the park service and the environment have never recovered. Interestingly, aerial culling is still used for pigs and deer, and even rabbits on the Main Range. Horses are only ever shot when they are found injured, and even then not from a helicopter.

Wild horse management plans

By the late 1990s horses were getting into the Main Range area of KNP. The first Wild Horse Management Plan was written around 2003, and focused only on areas above 1,800m. Passive trapping was the only control measure used. This method involves the setting up of semi-permanent trap yards, into which feed blocks, hay or molasses syrup are placed to lure in the horses. Sometimes it takes



Wetland damage with remnant soil pedestals on pools linked by horse tracks, near Little Tin Mine Creek. Photo by Di Thompson.

weeks or even months for horses to enter new yards. When they do, gates are activated by trip wires. Remote cameras are now used to monitor events, but in those days it required frequent visits to check whether traps had been sprung. Unfortunately, installations are prone to vandalism.

The second plan was instituted in 2008, acknowledging that horses were a problem throughout the whole park, not just on the Main Range. The plan embraced the whole park, with The Pilot, Tantangara and Long Plain areas being seen as particular problems.

Aerial surveys of the whole Australian Alps areas of NSW, Victoria and the ACT were undertaken, including coverage of all adjoining state forests, in 2001, 2003 (post fires), 2009 and 2014. This showed the population to be growing, despite a halving of numbers in the 2003 fires.

It is estimated that in 2014 there were around 6,000 feral horses in KNP, and that 43 per cent of the park, or 300,000 hectares, contained horses. Numbers were expanding at a rate of between 6 and 17 per cent per year. At this rate, it is estimated that 1,386 need to be removed each year, just to keep numbers constant. To achieve even a gradual reduction in numbers, at least 1,600 need to be removed each year. Trapping and removal of horses has now been going on since 2000, but the average rate of removal for that period is only about 200 per year. Clearly, the 2008 *Wild Horse Management Plan* has not been working.

Impacts

The impacts of wild horses may be considered in two categories – safety and environmental. Safety is an issue especially where main roads traverse the park, but so far there have been no (human) fatalities. There have, however, been instances where bushwalkers and campers have felt threatened.

The major impacts have been environmental. KNP exists primarily as a reserve system to protect environmental qualities. Some stakeholders take a contrary view. Some even argue that feral horses *improve* the environment, though the science says they are wrong.

Most affected are riparian and wetland areas and peat bogs. Alpine bogs in particular are vital habitat to critically endangered species – such as the Corroboree Frog and Broad-toothed Rat – that are covered by state and federal legislation. While the high wet areas are most vulnerable, the rain shadow area of Byadbo also has many horses making big impacts.

While other feral animals such as pigs, deer and rabbits are a problem in that they also access wet areas, they do not pose a problem on the scale of horses. Furthermore, there are established and effective control programs operating for these pests. Most pig damage is in fact in the Snow Grass areas, not the creeks and wet

(continued at foot of page 6)

Vale Audrey Hill, 1924–2015

Audrey Hill passed away on 4 April in the superb care of the staff of John Flynn House at St Andrews Village. Audrey was for many years a very active member of the NPA, in partnership with her late husband Charlie Hill.

Audrey was born in Melbourne in 1924 and, with her childhood friend of nearly 85 years, she rapidly realised her love of all aspects of our environment and the desire to conserve it. Her interest blossomed with bike rides into the then wilderness of the foothills of the Dandenong Ranges in the late 1930s.

Audrey joined the Victorian Walking Club and the Youth Hostels Association around 1940 to broaden her experience of the bush. Audrey also came to love skiing – indeed, she loved all aspects of the High Country. A couple of years after the war, she helped to build the YHA's first ski lodge on Mt Buller. It became known as Shiver Shanty. Audrey's hand-made Austrian skis, we believe of late 20s–early 30s vintage, are often on display at the National Museum here in Canberra.

But it was at Wilsons Promontory that Audrey met Charlie in a 90 mile per hour gale at the famous lighthouse. Charlie shared Audrey's deep love of nature and adventure. They married in 1949, had three children and, in 1960, the family moved to Canberra. In her later years, Audrey used to often say that coming to Canberra was the best thing

that could have happened for her and our family. She was right.

As their children were leaving home, the 1970s saw Charlie and Audrey's shared passion for our unique natural beauty grow further and they joined the NPA. Together they became deeply involved in all the conservation, heritage and fun activities of the association. Audrey was an active participant in committees, walking and car camps. In preparation for Charlie's retirement, they bought a Toyota High Ace Campervan in 1979, famous to NPA members for over a decade for its smiley face spare wheel on the bullbar. It allowed them to become pioneering grey nomads, often in the company of other NPA members. Our children fondly recall the regular adventures with their grandparents into Namadgi in the campervan.

A dominating memory for the Hill family going back over 30 years was one of washing, flattening and storing empty milk cartons. For months, our children were reminding us to keep each empty milk carton so they could give them to 'Nanny and Grandpa' Hill to grow baby trees for Gudgenby! It was all about participating visibly in celebrating the Year of the Tree during 1983. The idea evolved in the NPA committees to experiment with the science of native tree regeneration in the 'high country' at the Glendale site.



Photo by Pete Hill

Charlie died in October 2000 after a 10 year battle with a debilitating form of Parkinson's disease. With the help of her friends and the family, Audrey slowly got her life back together, and was starting to get back into things NPA with serious intent, when she became concerned about her memory ... Alzheimer's disease was not a welcome diagnosis just before her 80th birthday. With the help of her friends and family, she was able to be her independent self for a further 6 years before moving to St Andrews Village.

My parents love of our wilderness and the mountains – oh, and our coast – has rubbed off on all the family, and certainly on me. I have been involved in aspects of the NPA for over 20 years. And now we are introducing all its magic to our grandchildren as a source of wonderment for them. They are keen already.

Steve Hill

NPWS Review of Kosciuszko's feral horses *(continued from page 5)*

areas. Horses enter the wet areas to drink, and also in search of high nutrient, high protein feed in the *Carex* fens. In this process they trample sphagnum (which they do not eat), and cause stream bank slumping and erosion. Once trampled sphagnum dies, it can no longer provide for the slow release of water, nor assist in the regeneration of peat, which has built up over 10,000 years.

Choices

Removal of horses using the passive trapping technique has proved ineffective and costly. Once caught, horses are trucked out of the park often for great distances, but always to RSPCA approved standards. What to do with the animals is also emerging as a major problem. Around one third can be 're-homed', but this market is fast reaching saturation. The remainder (mainly stallions and old mares) must go to abattoirs, which are already burdened with processing huge numbers of surplus horses from the thoroughbred racing

industry – a trade which surprisingly does not seem to have attracted the attention of those lobbying for the KNP horses.

In reviewing control methods used in other jurisdictions, Rob noted that horses often get 'preferential' treatment over other feral species, especially when it comes to aerial culling. In the USA it is illegal to euthanise mustangs and burros (despite the fact that some states still have capital punishment for humans!). The federal Bureau of Land Management now reports 33,000 free-roaming horses in the western US, but even more – roughly 45,000 – are in short- or long-term holding facilities. The problem is that the cost of maintaining the captive horses is increasingly unsustainable. From 2013 through to 2030, caring for the horses will cost US taxpayers \$1.1 billion, and \$67 million annually after that. For the Northern Territory here, Rob quoted the case of the cattle station Tempe Downs, which recently aerielly culled 3,500 horses. An independent

veterinarian was employed to monitor the exercise and gather data. He found that each animal was pursued for an average of 73 seconds, and died within 8 seconds of being shot. To my mind that might inflict less distress on the animal than being held in a trap yard for days and then being loaded on a truck and transported hundreds of kilometres to the abattoir, which may or may not be able to take it.

In conclusion, Rob announced that the target is to get a new Wild Horse Management Plan out by midyear. In the meantime, an Independent Technical Reference Group has been set up to provide the best possible scientific and technical advice. It was hoped to get a lot of this material into the public domain after the NSW election. When the new plan is drafted it will be placed on public display.

Max Lawrence

(With thanks to Di Thompson for her advice and assistance.)

Report on the survey of NPA members



After years, the NPA has conducted a survey of its members. The survey ran for about 3 weeks and closed on 20 December 2014. Members with email addresses were asked to complete the survey online, but 13 members without an email service received a printed copy of the survey form.

Seventy-nine surveys were returned, approximately 30 per cent of our membership. The results confirm that NPA's combination of outings with environmental education and conservation advocacy is a very attractive feature, and most members joined NPA because of the possibility to enjoy outdoor activities and participate in lobbying for, and conservation of, our natural environment (95 per cent of respondents).

Members enjoy, in order: outings and bushwalks (84 per cent), *Bulletin* (73 per cent), books (65 per cent), *Burning Issues* (65 per cent), work parties (60 per cent), submissions and lobbying (41 per cent), monthly meetings (41 per cent) and social events (30 per cent of respondents).

Fifty-two respondents made suggestions for activities to attract families with children including: family day outings and overnight camps, short walks with things for children to look for and do, family picnics with a theme, interaction with schools, education workshop walks, heritage walks, and combining with ACT Parks 'Ranger for a Day' programs.

The respondents have considerable skills in: administration (14), policy (10), finance (4), marketing and media (8), social media (3), government liaison (5), submission writing (11), legal

matters (3), research (16) and physical work skills (22). Members indicated a willingness to join in the following activities and tasks: environment subcommittee (7), work parties (22), publications (5), committee (6), outings (7), promotion (4), social events (3), recruitment (4), finance (1), social media (2), *Bulletin* (5) and general meetings (10). Twenty-seven respondents already help in these areas.

Members' suggestions for making NPA more effective

Outings. Suggestions in the area of outings (19 responses) include: more social outings; more overnight/weekend walks; shorter walks and nature rambles; family-friendly outings (see above); car camps; as well as better presentation of our walks program on the website.

Work parties. Suggestions for more effective work parties (17) include: emphasise the 'feel-good' character; greater coordination with other ACT walking groups; get families more involved; encourage participants to bring friends along.

Media and public relations. Fifteen respondents think NPA media and public relations could be better by: regular publicity online; encouraging high-profile spokespeople to raise our profile; setting up regular displays at public events; using community bulletin boards to advertise NPA events; getting media interested in NPA's broad range of activities.

Member communication could be better by: more use of social media; being more welcoming to new members; regular brief, but stimulating, reports on activities to members; redesign of the website; organising more social get-togethers (14 responses, of which 5 were happy how this is being done already).

Protect the environment. In our efforts to protect the environment members would like to see: more involvement with NPA NSW and other environmental groups in the ACT and surrounding areas, including joint submissions, press releases, lobbying of politicians; outings and events to coincide with 'International Days'; NPA continue to publicise our efforts and 'brag' about our successes.

NPA's publications. Most respondents were positive about NPA's publications including the *Bulletin* and *Burning Issues* but suggest that we should look for more opportunities to sell our books

at community events and disseminate our *Bulletin* more widely to politicians, media people and opinion setters.

Member recruitment could be expanded by: disseminating older copies of the *Bulletin* at public outdoor activities (e.g. Floriade); having specific program items to attract younger people (see above for family-friendly activities); by a focused social media campaign; taking NPA message to teachers, pupils and students.

NPA's lobbying and submission writing are recognised as 'good-to-excellent' by members; however, working with other organisations is seen as needing more effort.

What is NPA doing with the results?

Various suggestions are already being acted upon, others have been taken up in the work plan. Further discussion of the survey results will be included in management committee meetings for the next couple of months.

- NPA is negotiating with the ANU Fenner School for student involvement with NPA, primarily to provide fieldwork experience through our work party program. We will offer complimentary membership to environmental science students.
- NPA application leaflets and the website will be redesigned.
- General meetings are being promoted more widely.
- Contact has been made with the Namadgi School.
- Walks leaders are encouraged to think about including more family-friendly activities in the outings program. Some of these have already taken place.
- Members who have volunteered for certain tasks have either already been contacted or will be contacted by the conveners of working groups and subcommittees.

Thank you to all members who took the time and made the effort to participate in our member survey. With your valuable and thoughtful contributions, and your help, the management committee will endeavour to make the NPA ACT a thriving and relevant organisation for many years to come.

**Graham Scully and Sonja Lenz
for the NPA committee**

Shadow of the Mountain

A stolen night climb. Uluru (Ayers Rock) rises 400m above the central Australian desert. Field work. No time during the day. So C and I climb it at night. Nowadays it might be illegal. Steep but rough sandstone, good friction. It's eerie on the summit in moonlight. C freaks out. Concerned, I take his hand to guide him down.

full moon casts
the shadow of the mountain
but I am young
and full of courage
and plunge into its depths

Gerry Jacobson

Max and Berts Hut work party



Max and Berts Hut. Photo by Max Lawrence.

Max and Berts Hut is located in a clearing above the Naas River on the slopes of Booth Range in Namadgi National Park, about 10 km south of Caloola Farm. Access is by the Naas Valley Fire Trail which passes within a kilometre of the hut and then on a mostly overgrown old vehicular track, involving a steep 200-m climb on foot through the bush.

On 28 March 2015, ACT Rangers Harley and Mark led 11 willing NPA volunteers on a work party to the hut. In the absence of Martin Chalk, Brian Slee was our leader for the day. The sky was clear, the morning cool, but warming quickly. The target feral in the vicinity of the hut was infestations of briar rose, their bright red hips making identification easy.

This was the second NPA work party at Max and Berts Hut. The first was in March 2013. On that occasion around 900 briars were cut and dabbed. The latest work party poisoned 661 briars and cut down 247 thistles (a single pine was also lopped).

Future work parties are needed. Not all briars have been cut and dabbed, and some of those treated in the second work party were regrowths of briars

Another work party finished. Photo by Max Lawrence.



treated in the first. Returning in spring rather than in autumn may be preferable. The briars will be in flower then and won't have formed seeds. Moreover, in view of the hut's isolated location, eliminating all briars in its vicinity may be a possibility.

European wasps were another feral pest in abundance around the hut. They were particularly numerous at lunchtime.

Philip Gatenby

Glenburn gazettal another step closer



Glenburn Homestead. Photo by Ed Highley.

After 15 years, the registration of the 'Kowen Cultural Precinct, Kowen' – to us the Glenburn/Burbong Historic Precinct – on the ACT Heritage Register came a significant step closer on 9 April, when the ACT Heritage Council provisionally registered the precinct.

I was invited to comment on the provisional registration papers. In a submission to the Council Secretary on 23 April 2015, I expressed my delight – and wholehearted support – that the council had finally taken this step – the major nomination covering most of the Glenburn sites is 15 years old.

As well as commenting on the description of the sites included in the precinct, and suggesting that Atkinson

Trig be added, I made three major comments:

- that I was disappointed the provisional registration papers did not mention the massive financial and other efforts made over the past 8 years – particularly by the ACT Parks and Conservation Service with help from NPA, the Friends of Glenburn and others – to protect and conserve several of the relics of early European settlement in the precinct. Without these efforts, many of the relics would now be in a much worse condition
- that there was no mention of the Glenburn/Burbong Heritage Trail being developed by the parks service and The Friends (see below)
- that there was no acknowledgment of the growing community awareness and interest in the precinct, which is behind locked gates and thereby has restricted access.

I also proposed that the precinct be called the 'Glenburn/Burbong Historic Precinct, Kowen Forest', which better describes the area. This name has been used by the parks service and The Friends of Glenburn for some time.

There will now be a consultation process before the council makes its final decision on gazettal, probably within the next 12 months.

Minister Rattenbury's visit

The ACT Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Shane Rattenbury, visited Glenburn homestead and Colliers homestead and orchard on 22 March to see improvements made since his last visit in October 2013.

The minister was particularly impressed with the improvements to the Colliers homestead ruins and orchard site, including the capping of the walls and the erection of a rabbit-proof protective fence, and thanked everyone involved.

Call for donations

The Friends are keen to contribute to the costs of making and maintaining the Glenburn/Burbong Heritage Trail – a circular trail of over 10 km which is being developed by the parks service with help from The Friends. It will be a great venue for people to improve their fitness and will provide them with an insight into how the early European settlers lived in a small rural community that is no more.

As Convenor of The Friends, I have made a submission to the NPA asking for up to \$3,000 to be used to meet some of the costs of the interpretative signs

(continued at foot of page 9)

Walking the Westmoreland Way 2014

(Continuing Tim Walsh's report from the March *Bulletin* on his walk of England's Westmoreland Way)

The landscape

The Lake District landscape has been celebrated through the ages by Romantic poets, novelists, Victorian tourists, calendar makers and guide book authors. Endless television documentaries have been made of the area. The walk was modest. It did not involve climbing any of the well-known high places. The highest pass we crossed was Grisedale Hause (610 m) between Patterdale and Grasmere. However, we did cover a wide variety of country including high moorland, lush green pastures and meadows, woodlands, timber plantations, river valleys (the Eden and the Kent) and canal towpaths (Lancaster). We walked the length of Ullswater, the second largest lake in England and passed close to and had views of Lake Windermere. Some of the stony tracks up and down hillsides needed care and the forested areas often required one to negotiate a tangle of tree roots. Some days were long, especially when we got lost!

The region is rich in historic buildings: large manor houses and modest stone cottages, Roman roads and forts, bridges, an abbey (Shap), a canal (Lancaster), railways and, of course the seemingly endless dry stone walls,

threading their way magically across the landscape. The skill and determination needed to build these ribbons of stone across steep hillsides is astounding. However, to me the most moving structures we re always the ancient churches one passes daily. Some small, others almost cathedral in grandeur. We usually wandered into these to marvel at their age and to read the memorial plaques recording lives long gone. These are generally in good condition, being kept so by small dedicated bands of parishioners and government grants, often under the auspices of the national lottery fund.

The frequent stiles and kissing gates were often too narrow to pass through with ease and sometimes so overgrown as to make things difficult. Not all the landscape in the Lake District is picturesque; for example, granite quarrying continues near the town of Shap and slate mining at Chapel Stile. The route crossed the M6 motorway twice and the mainline railway line to western Scotland.



A bridge over the Lancaster Canal. Photo by Tim Walsh.

Britain where the native Red Squirrel exists. The wild Fell Pony is a native of north-west England and lives on the moorland. Red Deer and Fox are present. The main bird species are the Buzzard, Dipper, Peregrine Falcon and Raven. Ospreys and Red Kites have been reintroduced. It was hoped that the one remaining pair of Golden Eagle would breed but the pair have not been seen for some time. The Golden Eagle now exists only in Scotland. Vendace, Schelly and Arctic Char are three of the endangered fish species found in some of the lakes.

This was a grand walk. Good company, iconic views, fine weather, interesting buildings (in good condition and ruined), friendly people and comfy accommodation. What more does one need?

Timothy Walsh

References

Westmorland Way, by Paul Hannon, Hillside, Keighley, 3rd edition, 1998
'Who owns the Lake District?' by Cal Flynn, in *Cumbria Life*, September 2014



Flora and fauna

The moorlands are mainly bracken and heather. Woodlands are made up of deciduous native oaks and extensive conifer plantations. The Sundew and Butterwort are two of the few carnivorous plants in the UK found in the area.

The Lake District is one of the few areas left in

Ullswater, the second largest lake in England. Photo by Tim Walsh.

Glenburn gazettal another step closer *(continued from previous page)*

relating to the trail. You can help by making a tax-deductible donation to the NPA and expressing a preference that the money be spent on Glenburn/Burbong.

Other news

The design work for a new interpretative sign for Atkinson Trig has been completed. The sign will cost \$572 and will be funded by The Friends.

U3A members visited the Glenburn/Burbong Historic Precinct on 11 March and 14 April. Participants were impressed with what has been done to protect and conserve some of the historic sites. Many favourable comments were made about the interpretative signs that have been erected.

On 7 May 2015, as Convenor of The Friends, I lodged an application for an

ACT Heritage Grant for half the cost of a consultant's fees of a little under \$20,000 to prepare a Conservation Management Plan for the Glenburn/Burbong Historic Precinct, Kowen Forest. The parks service will pay the rest. Successful grant applications will be announced in September 2015.

Col McAlister

Bushwalks

Goandra and Witses huts

Date: Sunday 1 March 2015.

Participants: Brian Slee (Leader), Peter Anderson-Smith, Jenny McGrath, Margaret Power.

Weather: Mild, breezy; rain at noon but otherwise sunny or partly cloudy.

Messy or vandalised – most Kosciuszko NP huts could have been so described before 1990. But the human impulse to leave a mark has been curbed. The culture has changed and neglect has ebbed away. Immaculate now occasionally applies.



Goandra Hut. Photo by Brian Slee.

Goandra Hut is a fine example. When last visited by NPA in 2003, rebuilding of the chimney had recently been completed and the hut's surrounds cleared of fallen timber. Park management and volunteers have continued their efforts, and restoration of the longed-for veranda, to frame the gorgeous view east, is in progress with the solid floor already completed. A loo and water tank remain on the wish list.

The hut is less than an hour on firetrail from the Snowy Mountains Highway. We had left Kambah at 7 am, wondering if the forecast meant we

would be better off staying in bed. So at 10:15 am, our lazy morning tea, in sun on the prospective veranda, revived us.

Challenges lay ahead. On descending east to Tantangara Plain, tussocky ground was encountered so we edged up the slope. Our ambling pace through the everlasting was stepped up on noticing dark clouds building in the south.

The many-coloured feral horses, the silver-grey leader of which had snorted at us on the way in, were spread across the plain. Approaching Tantangara Creek, we left the hillside too early and retreated to firm ground before eventually reaching the bridge around midday. Rain fell and accompanied us almost to Witses Hut.

Lunch was on planks under the tree behind the hut. Inside there was some graffiti, the names of the vain accompanied by 2014, indicating its recent origins. The vertical slab structure otherwise looked perfect, drying out under a clearing sky.

We returned to the bridge, climbed the hill south of Kiandra Creek before crossing the latter, and continued west in light forest to the top (1,495 m) of the next hill. The way forward was not clear – horse tracks everywhere – so we checked the GPS a few times before emerging to the view across Goandra Creek. From there it was a pleasant few kilometres across floodplain and low hills back to the firetrail and the car. Fat skins



Jenny near Goandra Creek. Photo by Brian Slee.

soaked in the sun, a White-lipped Snake darted away. No-one else seen all day. 17 km.

Adaminaby's bakery was closed (they seem unhappy about having customers), so afternoon tea was cold drinks and nibbles at busy Snow Goose Hotel. After a brief tour of the town we turned for home, arriving Kambah at 6:45 pm. Inspiring day.

Note: For comparisons, the drive via Boboyan Road (currently in good condition but replete with roos and wallabies) took 15 minutes less than the return via Cooma.

Brian Slee



Witses Hut. Photo by Brian Slee.

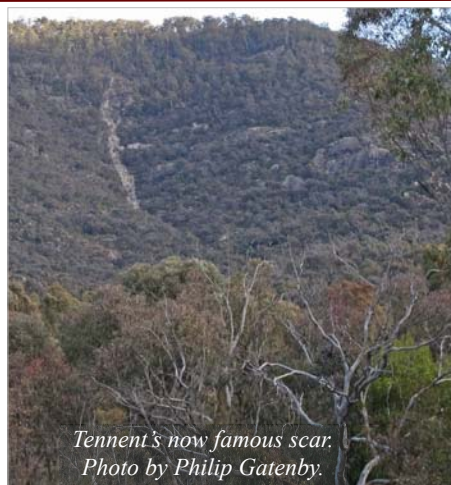
Mt Tennent

Date: Sunday 1 February 2015.

Participants: Margaret Power (Leader), Brian Slee (Honorary Leader), Peter Anderson-Smith, Jenny McGrath, Michaela Popham.

Weather: Cloudy, cool; air mostly still.

Having convened at Calwell Shops at 7 am, we mulled over last-minute advice that Ramshead was forecast to be shrouded in cloud. So four of us decided to follow Margaret up Mt Tennent (1,384 m) instead. It was only a short



*Tennent's now famous scar.
Photo by Philip Gatenby.*

distance from Calwell to Namadgi Visitor Centre, Tharwa, from where we set off at 7:30.

The 2012 landslide scar on Tennent is still distinct but there was no enthusiasm for investigating it as a path to the top. The view to Rob Roy was misty as we followed the Australian Alps Walking Track (AAWT) across the face of the mountain. Ramshead would have been a 610 m climb over 4 km from Dead Horse Gap whereas this was a 780 m climb over 6 km. We were thus

(continued at foot of page 11)

Mt Twynam

Date: Sunday 15 February 2015

Participants: Steve Hill (Leader) and Brian Slee

Weather: Cloudy, cool, breezy.

Puff, puff, puff. Would he make it? We were on only the first stage, from the Snowy River to Blue Lake Lookout, and I was doubtful. Plod, plod, plod as I synced with the slow pace. Finally we were at the lookout – our destination was Twynam (2,196 m, Australia's third highest peak), 200 m above us and initially very steep.



Watsons Crags and Brian. Photo by Steve Hill.

When Steve was last on the summit in 2010 he experienced the first twinges of what led to a quadruple bypass operation. Getting back on Twynam would be both a physical test and a challenge of confidence. In the intervening years, numerous scalings of Mt Taylor had emboldened the lad and I was about to see the result. A trio of young runners saw us off. And of course Steve got there – he strode away up that steep bit. Thrill of being there, he says. Oxygen bubble in the brain maybe.

Mountain magic then took over in other ways. Mid-February, above 2,000 m, means Gentians in profusion,

One of the creeks flowing into Blue Lake. Photo by Steve Hill.

seed heads on flowers we were too late to see, and usually little else. But once we were on the Main Range ridge, *Senecio* (Groundsel) was everywhere, except that on close inspection its yellow masses often resolved into cute collections of tiny

Billy Buttons. Good summer rain had encouraged Carpet Heath into outlandish displays of red berries. Patches eaten and trampled bare by long-departed cattle were being seriously invaded by mats of Silver Ewartia. An extraordinary proliferation.

All this against dramatic Watsons Crags, billowing with cloud rising from the west. In our enthusiasm we had not noticed how close we were to our destination, still topped with its

tottering trig. Lunch at 12:30 pm. No flies. We were joined by members of Wollongong Rotary who were showing the High Country to a German exchange student and a Frenchman from Strasbourg. Lively conversation ensued.

We had planned to descend the peak by first retracing our steps for 500 m to the source of Blue Lake Creek. Instead we headed straight down, over boulders but mainly



Carpet Heath at over 2,100 m. Photo by Steve Hill.

alpine grass, to the waterfall where that creek starts a classic meander across a plain (a beautiful lemon/green 'rice paddy', turned soggy by the season). Dozens of ravens squawked, perhaps there to feast on the plague of lizards we had been seeing all day. Cloud had settled on Twynam.

It was a hop, skip and several onerous jumps across the south end of Blue Lake before we were back at the lookout. The path down to the lake was being blue metalled by a workman in a compact little Kubota. The gloomy sky proved temporary and we were in sun back at Charlotte Pass soon after 4 pm.

About 12 km. Home before 7.

Brian Slee



Mt Tennent

 (continued from previous page)

making good use of the time saved in not travelling to the Snowy Mountains.

Several cute little wallabies stopped and stared. Jenny spotted a lyrebird. Although the cassinia was in flower, not much else was. Quite a few runners passed, at hair-raising speed, as we joined Mt Tennent Fire Trail and completed the climb to the fire lookout, arriving there at 9:40 am.

After morning tea it was decided to continue down the fire trail to Bushfold

Flats and have an early lunch at Reads Hut. The hut is renowned for having been demolished by NPA after it was largely destroyed in the 2003 bushfires, only to be rebuilt by Kosciuszko Huts Association. Not the prettiest hut in the mountains but a pleasant place to wile away time.

After lunch we continued north through the pretty valley before leaving the kangaroos and parrots behind and following the footpad up to the AAWT.

Views over Canberra were now clear; cloud was building in the west but rain did not fall until well after we were back at the Visitor Centre.

Eighteen kilometres altogether. The walk up Mt Tennent is usually too hot to be undertaken during the day in summer so it was rare timing for an NPA outing. Still warm enough for ice-creams at our destination, however.

Brian Slee

Dieback pathogen found in Kosciuszko NP

An invasive pathogen that causes dieback in shrubs and trees has been identified in a common alpine shrub in the Kosciuszko National Park.

Phytophthora cambivora became obvious in *Nematolepis ovatifolia* (aka *Phebalium ovatifolia*; Family Rutaceae;), which is endemic in the Snowy Mountains, in the summer of 2012–13, when large areas of the shrub became chlorotic (abnormal yellow colour) and turned chestnut brown.

Root and soil samples taken the following summer confirmed the presence of *P. cambivora*.

As *N. ovatifolia* was the only plant obviously affected, a project funded by the Australian Alps Liaison Committee began mapping the extent of the infection.

The survey carried out over the summers of 2013–14 and 2014–15 aimed to encompass the entire range of *N. ovatifolia*. Of the 186 sites surveyed, 59 populations were found to be affected, another 92 had suspicious symptoms, and 35 were healthy.

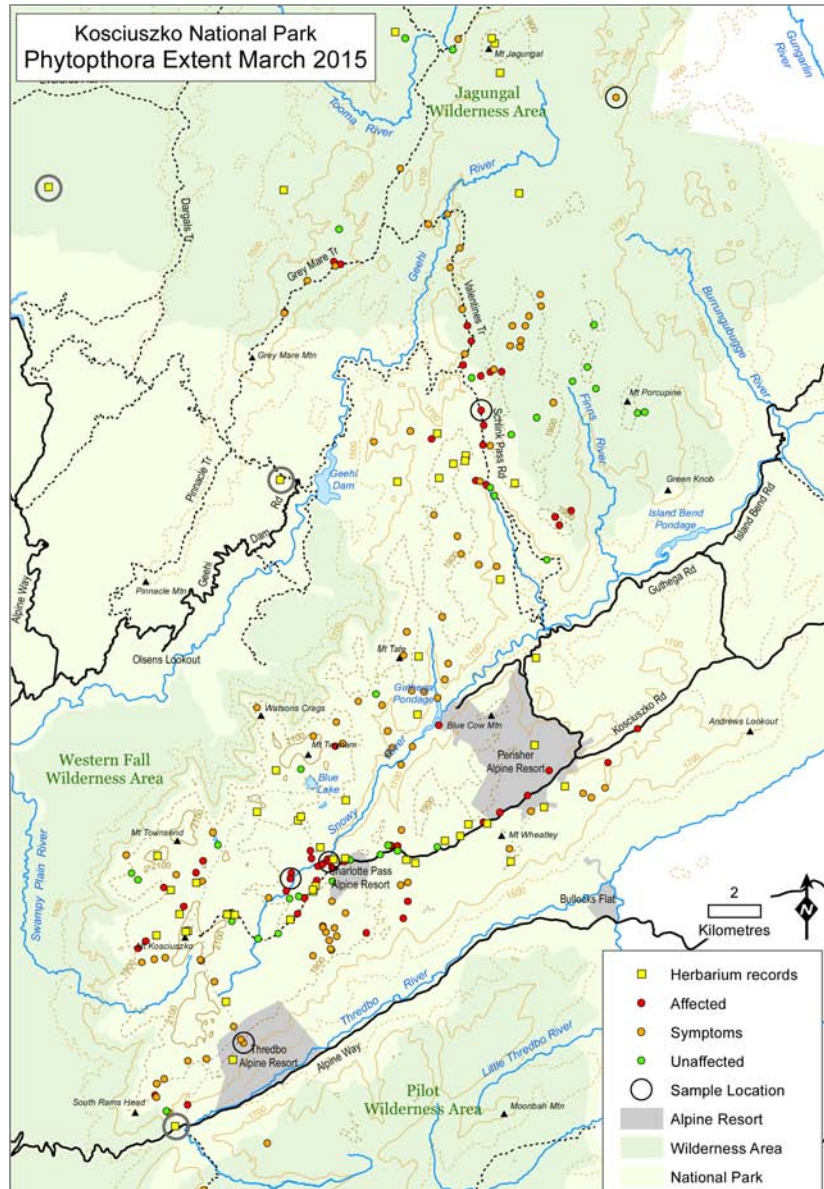
In late summer 2015 newly significantly affected shrubs were seen only in locations such as Charlotte Pass where a high number of plants had already died. Elsewhere, other populations originally classified as suspicious had recovered.

Affected populations have been near firetrails and roads. Soil samples are still being collected along the length of the Australian Alps Walking Track in Victoria, NSW and the ACT, and hygiene points to brush mud off boots have been established at huts along some of the most affected sites in Kosciuszko National Park.

A trial using phosphite to treat affected plants began in spring 2014. Phosphite sprayed on the foliage of infected plants has proven to be a successful treatment for *Phytophthora* infection in certain plants. Most of the 120 plants sprayed in the trial appear to have recovered, and the few plants that continued to decline in health already had extensive dieback or were moribund.

Generally, plants with extensive damage were not used in the trial, so a population of *N. ovatifolia* that included seriously affected plants was assessed in December 2014 and revisited in March 2015. Of 74 plants symptomatic or seriously affected in December, 28 were assessed as still affected in March, and many of them were by then dead. Forty-six plants were assessed as 'recovered'.

Only three plants recorded as



uninfected in December were infected in March.

The only location where there has been continued extensive appearance of symptoms leading to serious infection has been in the Charlotte Pass/Snowy River populations where dieback was first noted in the summer of 2012–13.

In Australia, *P. cambivora* severely damages fruit trees such as apple, cherry and almond. However, the decline of eucalypts in Australia due to the pathogen is fortuitous and its importance marginal.

Alpine ecologist Ken Green, who first recorded the dieback, has conducted the survey of *Nematolepis* over 2 years and also the phosphite trials. He is leading a team from land management agencies from the ACT, NSW and Victoria trying to establish the extent of the pathogen outside of the range of *Nematolepis*, while researchers from Griffith University, Queensland, are examining

vegetation regrowth patterns beneath the dying shrub layer.

'It appears that *P. cambivora* is widespread and entrenched in Kosciuszko National Park and the chances of eradicating it are poor', Ken said. 'However, if *Nematolepis* is the only affected plant and the phosphite treatment is found to work, there is hope for containing the pathogen and minimising its effect on the flora.'

The map shows the extent of *N. ovatifolia* from online herbarium records (three erroneous records circled) and 186 locations assessed as unaffected, those with apparent early symptoms of infection and those seriously affected by dieback in the summers of 2013–14 and 2014–15. Populations where roots/soils were sampled are circled.

Allan Sharp

History of nature conservation in the ACT

Marking the thirtieth anniversary of Namadgi National Park and the one-hundredth anniversary of legislative protection of the ACT environment in 2014, ACT Parks and Conservation Service (PCS) has commenced a project documenting the history of nature conservation in the ACT.

Mark Butz is the person appointed to manage this project. Mark is a professional consultant, facilitator and writer, and he was our guest speaker at NPA's March general meeting.

At the start of his talk Mark acknowledged the traditional owners of this land, who have lived here for millennia. He also acknowledged NPA's role in campaigning for Namadgi National Park, from the association's inception in 1960 until park gazettal in 1984, and its continuing role in supporting nature conservation more generally.

Primary forces

The history of nature conservation in what is now the ACT has evolved over time as pressures on land use and the state of knowledge on matters ecological have also evolved. Before about 1820 the primary forces were matters of survival and spiritual attachment to the land. From 1820 till about 1910 they were rural production and environmental degradation. Then, until the 1930s there were tensions between production and conservation as the constituency grew, and there were emerging battles between the two forces. These battles became more intense in the period through to about the 1950s as tensions developed between urbanisation and conservation. Since then there has been a broader perspective, with issues such as protection of catchments and landscapes, Aboriginal knowledge, cultural heritage values, community participation and environmental repair entering the mix in greater degree.

Milestones

Particular milestones mentioned by Mark were the protection of the Cotter catchment in the 1910s; the formation of the NPA in 1960; the Gudgenby Nature Reserve proposals 1963–72 and gazettal 1978; the gazettal of Namadgi National Park in 1984; the formation of the Australian Alps National Parks agreement between the Commonwealth, state and ACT governments in 1986; the opening of the award-winning Namadgi Visitor Centre in 1990; the northern extension of Namadgi to the Lower



*A hundred years of protection: the Cotter River near Vanitys Crossing.
Photo by Philip Gatenby.*

Cotter in 1991; the cross-border agreements of 1996; and the opening of the Community Access Exhibition Space at the Visitor Centre in 2014.

Aboriginal culture

Mark mentioned the following developments in Aboriginal involvement: the Aboriginal Trainee Ranger program at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve; the Aboriginal Advisory Board of the mid 1990s; the Interim Namadgi Advisory Board 2000; the Ngunnawal Traditional Custodian 2002; the Trainee Program (to Certificate III) 2002; signs and cultural camping; the Namadgi Rock Art Working Group 2003; Australian Alps First Peoples; Murrumbung Yurrung Murra and Yurrung Dhaura 2010s; and the Ngunnawal Country Ranger 2011–12.

Cultural heritage places

As Mark stated, there have been several sudden changes in direction in this matter. Through the 1960s and 1970s the practice was to 'knock 'em down'. Then, following the Burra Charter in 1979, the practice was to 'lock 'em up'. From 1995 on it was to adaptively re-use them, a notable example being the 'Ready Cut' Gudgenby Cottage, or to 'reunite' them as was the case with samples of the original Gudgenby homestead being displayed near the Visitor Centre (Gudgenby in a box). Along the way several important pieces of cultural heritage have been lost forever, perhaps most notably the space tracking stations of the 1960s and 1970s.

Community constituency

ACT community organisations were listed in chronological order, starting with the Canberra Alpine Club (1934) and the Canberra Walking and Touring Club (1947). The latter subsequently morphed into the Canberra Bushwalking Club in 1961. In 1957 the Society for Growing Australian Plants was established, and our own NPA came on the scene in 1960. Amid a plethora of other bodies coming to the fore since then are the Kosciuszko Huts Association (1971); the Conservation Council (1979); and the Environmental Defenders' Office (1995).

Community participation

Since self government in 1989 (but perhaps not because of self government?) there has been a big increase in opportunities for members of the community to become actively involved in a hands-on manner. Notable examples include Parkcare, Waterwatch, Paddock care, Urban Landcare, Landcare itself, and the various catchment groups. NPA itself is closely associated with the Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group and The Friends of Glenburn.

In conclusion, Mark urged us to assist, by:

- **reflecting** (on what, who and where we know);
- **connecting** (with PCS and others, and generating awareness and interest);
- **contributing** (information, images, objects, contacts, research); and
- **celebrating** (speaks for itself).

Max Lawrence

Evaluating Supplementary Pest Control

The NSW Government abolished the Game Council in 2013 and instructed the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) to set up a 3-year trial of Supplementary Pest Control (SPC) programs in 12 NSW national parks and nature reserves. SPC is not a stand-alone activity but is being integrated with existing NPWS pest control programs and aims to assess whether ground-level shooting using volunteers could be added to NPWS's current suite of pest control techniques.

The Natural Resources Commission (NRC) has been tasked with evaluating the SPC trial and will consider:

- the effectiveness of the trial in contributing to the aims and objectives of existing NPWS pest control programs
- the efficiency of the trial, including costs and benefits and comparison with alternative uses of the available resources

- social impacts – safety, animal welfare, stakeholder perceptions and engagement with neighbours, Aboriginal groups and other local stakeholders.

Both NPWS and NRC have told us that they are committed to working closely with stakeholders, including community groups, and NRC will release a preliminary evaluation report (provided to the Minister at the end of December 2014), followed by an interim report at the end of 2015 and a final in May 2017. An overview of the evaluation framework can be downloaded from the home page of NRC at www.nrc.nsw.gov.au

I participated in a teleconference held on 8 December 2014 to discuss some community concern that supporters of 'conservation hunting' may cherry-pick the data to continue to push for unregulated amateur hunting in national parks and nature reserves on the same conditions that exist in NSW forests

(online booking etc.). My co-participants were Andrew Cox from the Invasive Species Council and, from NRC, Lauren Tapp and CEO Bryce Wilde.

It was most reassuring to hear of the NRC's process, its willingness to hear our views and the number of times its personnel have gone into the field to inspect the program. It was encouraging too to learn that independent reviewers have been identified: a vertebrate pest ecologist from New Zealand; a Queensland professional for the socioeconomic evaluation; and Brian Gilligan, former NPWS D-G and former NRC Assistant Commissioner, for the peer review.

The NRC offered to keep me, and Andrew Cox, updated as the evaluation progresses.

Graham Scully

Car camp at Meroo Point

A party of 11 NPA folk, camping for four nights at Meroo Point, just south of Ulladulla, experienced both the trials and the joys of camping in a bush environment. As the accompanying photo shows, the day of rain persisted into the convivial evening gathering. We, not surprisingly, managed that day with a lengthy cafe visit before traipsing in the rain through the vast midden at the Murramarang Aboriginal Area at Bawley Point and lunch in a shelter at Pretty Beach. I think every other day most managed swims in warm water in either the ocean or lake.

Walks up and down the coast visiting beaches, headlands and lakes allowed for viewing of remarkably diversified vegetation and landforms. Lace Monitors were common and sizeable, a Swamp Wallaby visited each evening, an antechinus performed standing tricks under Rene Lays' car and many of us stepped unknowingly over a Red-Bellied Black Snake. Helen and Jimmie Stevens came down from the Lake Macquarie area, and Helen provided NPWS with a bird list, comprising 39 species from around the



Meg and Frank McCone and Gary and Di Thompson enjoyed good cheer despite the rain. Photo by Kathy Saw.

camp/lake area, and seven species from a lunchtime spot at Tabourie Lake. The highlights were three Glossy Black Cockatoos (with bright red tails) and a pair of the 'vulnerable' Hooded Plovers. There are only 50 pairs of Hooded Plovers recorded in southern coastal NSW. The ranger was thrilled, but would have been over the moon had Meg McKone's photo of the pair not shown their leg-bands!

Despite our stay starting on a Sunday afternoon, Meroo Point and the other

camp sites in the national park still had many users. Large smouldering fires were left and the signs of misuse (especially lax toileting practices) and other rubbish were everywhere. Members of our group put out one large fire and cleaned up significant amounts of rubbish from our camping area and in the car park. Camping is free, but it comes at a cost of overuse and abuse, all the more surprising as the turn-off is hard to find and Meroo is not a high profile park. NPWS has plans to reduce the number of camp sites, put in new

toilets, and introduce a fee and booking system for Christmas and Easter peak periods.

All agreed it was a lovely area with much to enjoy and appreciate for nature lovers. I first visited Meroo with Reg Alder and Fiona MacDonald Brand more than 30 years ago, when it was part of Termeil State Forest. What a find it was then and remains so today, but it does require more up-front management of the people pressures.

Di Thompson

Walking the Freycinet Peninsula circuit



Looking north to Wineglass Bay, The Hazards and Coles Bay from the summit of Mt Graham. Photo by Ed Highley.

The Freycinet Peninsula circuit in the Freycinet National Park is billed as one of the 'Great bushwalks of Tasmania', so five of us (three NPA members) decided to do it in November last year. We flew into Launceston, picked up a people-mover and made the 3-hour drive to Coles Bay, where we camped overnight in the national park campground, a beautiful by-the-water spot with an unimpeded view of the impressive rocky peaks called The Hazards. Before retiring, we partook of delicious deep-fried flathead, chips and salad at the Coles Bay Tavern. The beer was pretty good too.

Next morning we were off early to make the 12–13 km walk to Cooks Hut. The first part of the walk – to Hazards Beach – skirts the coast and affords fine views across Great Oyster Bay westward to the 'mainland' and back towards Coles Bay. The vegetation, as for much of the rest of the walk at lower elevations, is dominated by eucalypts but, it being the springtime, there was plenty of stuff in flower at all stages of the walk.



Left. Cooks Beach track.

Right. Rest stop on the track to Mt Graham: (l-r) Martin Schaeffer, Paul Mlakar, Allan Sharp and Don Beattie.

Photos by Ed Highley.

The tide was low, so the walk along Hazards Beach was extra-pleasant. Here we spied the first of quite a few pairs of Pied Oystercatchers, which nest on the beach above high-water mark, and a haughty Pacific Gull, a bigger bird than the Silver Gull common in our part of the world. Later on, we spotted a Hooded Plover, a tiny (endangered) bird that, disappointingly, evaded our cameras.

Skirting the camp site at the end of Hazards Beach, we pressed on, along a track that moves a little inland and presented more interesting over- and understory vegetation. Some 4 km on is the start of Cooks Beach, where the track takes a sharp left-hand turn to head towards the summit of Mt Graham. But that was to be the next day for us. We made instead the 30-minute side trip along the beach to Cooks Hut.

The Cooks Hut camp site was very pleasant; grassy and embellished with beautiful honey-scented kunzeas. There are water tanks (which were full), a standard-issue Parks Tasmania elevated dunny (with no views to speak of, unfortunately) and, of course, the hut itself, which boasts a solid table and benches permitting communal cooking and dining.

We got to Cooks Hut in time for a late lunch, after which we made the round trip of 90 or so minutes to Bryans Beach with its view across Schouten Passage to Schouten Island. It would have been nice to visit the island but we had no boat, unlike the lucky sailor in the yacht moored just offshore.

We started day 2 very early, to make the 6-km, 550-m climb to the top of Mt Graham. Mt Freycinet is up there too, as a side trip. Overall, it's a not-too-onerous climb with the vegetation transitioning from tall eucalypt forest with a diverse understory

including tree ferns at lower elevations, to heathland with a profusion of melaleuca, bauera and other shrubs near the summit.

We had fine views through the trees back towards Cooks Beach and Schouten Island on the early part of the track, but then sea mist drifted in from the east and that put an end to the wider picture for a while. There was a pronounced drop in temperature too. We hadn't planned to do Mt Freycinet, and the park guide cautions that it should not be 'treated as a spontaneous extra'. We took that advice and, in any case, the peak was shrouded in mist. Onward we went, on the toughest part of the climb; the last 800 m to the top, a 200-m climb up what seemed more like the boulder-strewn, narrow creek bed than a track.

Of course it was worth it; the gods smiled on us as we reached the summit, for the mist cleared to the north and we were privy to the stunning panorama from Hazards Beach, through The Hazards to Cape Tourville.

After a brief lunch stop in either light drizzle or heavy mist, I'm not sure which, it was 5 km down the hill to camp at Wineglass Bay, where the sun was shining from a cloudless sky on the glistening sand. We took a leisurely walk along the beach, soaking up the wonder of the place. An interesting physical feature of the beach is that the sand at its southern end is very fine, whereas it is quite coarse at its northern extremity. I wonder what forces are doing this particle-size sorting.

The Wineglass Bay camping area is very pleasant, though curiously there is no water tank, only a dunny. But the creek had plenty of water in it so, at dinnertime, heavily tanned tea was had while fighting off the pademelon that looked on any food left unattended for more than a second or two as fair game.

Up early again on day 3, to make the short, 4-km walk back to our starting

(continued at foot of page 16)



Bettongs and little critters

We have visited the Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve several times without really knowing very much about it and jumped at the chance to do a spotlight tour to see some of the animals and learn more about it. The tours of the Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary are run by the Woodlands and Wetlands Trust, and our guide was their ecologist Kate Grarock. Those attending were members Graham and Helen Scully, Chris Emery, Sabine Friedrich, Kathy Saw, Ruth Smith and Debbie Cameron and friend, plus two volunteers from the Canberra Visitor Centre.



*Sugar Glider at Mulligans Sanctuary.
Photo by Sabine Friedrich.*

Thirty bettongs from Tasmania were the first members of an endangered species to be introduced into the reserve. They were pampered and cared for before being released into the sanctuary proper. As they are small, rabbit-size marsupial creatures related to kangaroos no one was sure how well they would cope. They have survived and thrived and now number around 200 – excellent! They benefit the soil hardened

by many years of sheep grazing because they dig for little tubers and so open up the soil, enabling water to seep in and vegetation to rot.

Unfortunately, the lack of fox predation now means that not only the bettongs but also rabbits are doing well, and the rangers are having some difficulty in eradicating them. Next time it might be that the rabbits go first, then the foxes before introducing the new dwellers! We were delighted and privileged to see 14 bettongs that night in addition to some beautiful webs of Golden Orb Weaving Spiders with their manufacturers residing in the middle waiting for their prey. Their webs are sticky with good reason, but the single strand that attaches the web to the ground or tree is not. Just on the way out we saw a tiny Sugar Glider very busily gnawing at the bark and sap of a wattle two metres away at eye level. So busy was it that no notice was taken of us gawking humans with spotlight. The feeding continued with great intensity and must have been its equivalent of a good lobster!

Sabine managed some wonderful photos just to prove that I am not exaggerating, as if I would, being the sort of person who is unlikely to spot anything in the bush! In addition to the revelations from the spotlight we also learned quite a lot about the plans for the enclosure project, including the intention to reintroduce Spotted Eastern Quolls. Bush Stone-curlews have also been introduced and we heard tales about their wanderings out of the enclosure and back again. One of the surprising things I learned was that dead timber on the ground – that stuff that I always thought was excellent for a nice fire – is actually so beneficial for beetles and other insects that leaf litter from underneath fallen

*Brush-tail Possum at Mulligans Sanctuary.
Photo by Sabine Friedrich.*



*Kate Grarock at Mulligans Education area.
Photo by Sabine Friedrich.*

timber yields about three times more species of insects than leaf litter from ground where there is no fallen timber. As a result, many of the fallen trees from Canberra suburbs are being relocated to the ground at Mulligans Flat. Maybe I won't collect timber so vigorously for my camp fires in the future!

Think about joining one of these spotlight tours and you too will undoubtedly learn much and see plenty, and leave knowing that your entry fee has done its bit to support this sanctuary and its wonderful animals.

Helen Scully



Walking the Freycinet Peninsula circuit *(continued from page 15)*



point. It was Saturday morning and the last part of our journey was on the path up to the postcard-famed Wineglass Bay lookout. Its popularity has not diminished; the path was packed with upwardly mobile visitors, mostly from lands to our north.

We made a couple of side-trips to Cape Tourville and Carp and Sleepy bays before lunch at the tavern (marvellous calamari, and beer). Then it was back to lovely Launceston for a hearty curry dinner at The Indian Empire.

A grand time was had by all. The walk is highly recommended.

Ed Highley

*Southern end of Wineglass Bay near the campground.
Photo by Ed Highley*

All-terrain access to our Bush Capital

The evidence is clear; connecting with nature is simply good for your mind, body and soul. Here in our beautiful Bush Capital you don't have to venture too far to connect with our stunning natural environment, it's right on our collective doorstep.

In recent times the Parks and Conservation Service has adopted the 'Healthy Parks Healthy People' philosophy which speaks of the tangible health benefits to be gained from our parks for our community. Evidence would suggest that being exposed to our natural environment can help us cope with emotional anxiety and ill health, nature can provide us with inspiration and a real sense of purpose in our day-to-day lives. Nature can indeed nurture.

So it's a natural fit that as a park service we want our community to explore and connect with everything our magnificent conservation estate has to offer, but for some Canberrans with mobility issues this can be a rather daunting challenge.

A few years ago, the National Parks Association of the ACT (NPA), a wonderful community based organisation who are passionate about our parks and reserves, made a kind and generous gesture to the park service. Through the generosity of their members the NPA purchased and donated to the Canberra community a 'TrailRider', an all-terrain wheelchair.

Exploring the beautiful surrounds of Canberra's nature reserves, parks and

open spaces is an opportunity that everyone should be able to enjoy, regardless of their physical limitations. The all-terrain wheelchair is a great way for mobility-impaired visitors to get out there and enjoy all that is on offer in our Bush Capital.

As the name would suggest, the all-terrain wheelchair is designed to access walking tracks and paths as they meander through our national parks and nature reserves. The wheelchair can be booked free of charge and taken to a range of reserves, including Black Mountain, Mount Ainslie or Tidbinbilla, as well as Namadgi National Park. The chair can be easily disassembled to fit in the back of a large family car.

Recently as part of the Heritage Festival, NPA members hosted the wheelchair in the grounds of the Namadgi Visitor Information Centre. To witness the smiles on the faces of those who participated was to witness sheer joy. It was simply inspirational.

There are so many incredible experiences to be gained and unique landscapes to explore. The all-terrain wheelchair can be your mobility passport to get out there.

Explorers will need to supply their own cycling helmet and participate in a short induction session before venturing out. If you or a family member would



Photo supplied by Graham Scully.

like to book the chair free of charge give the Tidbinbilla Visitor Centre a call on 6205 1233. For more information about the all-terrain wheelchair visit www.tams.act.gov.au

Brett McNamara
Regional Manager with ACT
Parks and Conservation Service

Previously published in
The Chronicle, 5 May 2015

Namadgi book price reduction



Our wonderful book *Namadgi – A National Park for the National Capital* has been reduced to \$15 RRP as a way to better publicise the park. This is a bargain.



NPA ACT Art Week at Gudgenby Cottage

Saturday 3–11 October

This year NPA ACT's art week is a month later than last year. *Art Week at Gudgenby Cottage* is a chance for members of NPA ACT to explore their more creative selves through painting, drawing, writing, photography, or other artistic endeavours inspired by Namadgi. Explore the area from a base in the Gudgenby Valley; share warm, comfortable and convivial evenings. You can join in for a day, overnight, or several days and nights. (Note that overnight numbers will be limited to six people per night.) There is a charge of \$30 per person per night.

For information and to express your interest in participating, contact:

Adrienne Nicholson on 6281 6381 or
Christine Goonrey on 6231 8395 or
cgoonrey@grapevine.com.au

Book review

Photographic Guide to Native Plants of the Australian Capital Territory

by Meredith Cosgrove

Meadow Argus Books, Canberra, 2014

360 pages, \$45.00

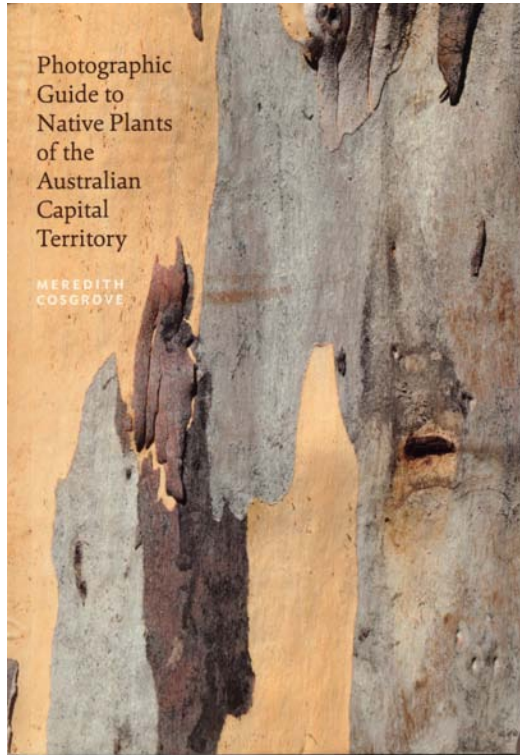
Here is a beautifully illustrated book of 327 flowering plant species native to the ACT, with 1,388 colour photographs that show the whole plant, flower and fruit for each. Complementing the photos are short descriptions of habit (herb, shrub, tree), height range, flowering and fruiting time, flower colour, type of fruit, key identification characteristics, frequency of occurrence, habitat and altitude range, synonyms, additional notes, and species numbers in the ACT, Australia and worldwide. Leaf length and width, as well as flower and fruit size, are also presented as range bars. Furthermore, there are bubble graphs for the altitudinal range and small maps showing ACT distribution.

Meredith Cosgrove spent 7 years taking the photos of these mostly common native plants and has produced intriguing photos, with some of the macro photos illustrating minute distinguishing details.

The introduction informs us about the photographs, the species accepted for the book and their synonyms, the size bar, Meredith's use of simplified botanical language, the habitat types, the species numbers for the genera depicted, the flowering and fruiting dates, as well as the maps and graphs. Acknowledgments and general references are also part of the introduction.

An explanation on how to use the book follows the introduction, detailing that plant descriptions start with the conifers *Callitris endlicheri* or Black Cypress Pine and *Podocarpus lawrencei* or Mountain Plum Pine of the families Cupressaceae and Podocarpaceae, and that the contents are then arranged alphabetically by family, beginning with the Amaranthaceae.

Each letter of the alphabet has a different colour representation, keeping in mind that the colour represents the **family** name that starts with that particular letter. This is a bit confusing for people, like me, who are not used to identifying plants by their family. However, on page ix is a most useful coloured table that shows which plant families have flowers of a particular



colour, ranging from white, through yellows, pinks, red, brown, blues and purples, to green and lemon. So, knowing the flower's colour the reader can check up the families the plant might belong to and then look up the species within each family. Genera and species within the families are also arranged alphabetically.

This is where a contents page would be desirable to show the range of different families and where in the book they are presented to the reader.

A generalised map of the ACT indicating built-up areas and some main roads, natural reserves including Namadgi National Park, urban parklands, mountain and hill peaks helps the reader find approximately where the dots on the distribution maps for each species are located. These dots show where verified records of the particular species have been collected. The altitude ranges given for each species are also only from preserved (i.e. verified) herbarium specimens.

Pages vi–vii show typical photos of the seven ACT habitat types the author uses, with an interesting diagram that depicts these habitat types in relation to well-known geographic features (mainly hills and mountains) and their altitudes. Here again colour is used to differentiate the habitats.

As well as a 'normal' glossary explaining botanical terms, a visual glossary showing and naming generalised flower parts, Asteraceae

flowers and flowerheads and their types of inflorescences, *Eucalyptus* bud and fruit shapes, leaf shapes and leaf margins helps the user of this book with identification.

The eucalypts receive, rightly so in my opinion, special treatment in that each species or subspecies has a double page in this guide (every other described species has a single page of photos and information dedicated to it) which means that more detailed photos and descriptions of bark, leaves (both juvenile and adult), buds and fruit ('gum nuts') help the interested layperson distinguish between these iconic Australian plants.

At the end of the book are indexes of the common and scientific plant names. It is amazing how much information each page of this great book contains and the wealth of detail the author has condensed to produce it, but I can't help thinking that a blank page or two could have given the reader a bit of 'white space' to momentarily pause for orientation in this very dense compendium.

The introduction gives some details about the author's work on this book but I really miss more exhaustive notes about her working career as part of this publication. From her website we glean that Meredith has worked on the Australian Plant Census at CSIRO and is currently a PhD student in the Department of Evolution, Ecology and Genetics at the ANU where she is studying the evolution of native plants. It is most fortunate for nature lovers that she has found the time to put together this photographic guide. Meredith's work is complemented by a very capable designer, her sister Gillian Cosgrove.

Meredith Cosgrove is to be congratulated on producing this wonderful book which I'm sure many NPA members will add to their reference book collection.

The book is available from:

The website meadow-argus.com

Phone 0425 178 218

Email meadow.argus.books@gmail.com

or from the National Arboretum, and

Namadgi and Tidbinbilla visitor centres.

Sonja Lenz

PARKWATCH

Edited extracts from recent issues of journals and newsletters, and online sources.

Conservation initiatives for the Andrews government

The VNPA congratulates Daniel Andrews and his party on their victory in the 31 November [2014] state election. We look forward to working constructively with the new government. The environment policies of the new Labor Government will reverse many of the Ballieu/Napthine governments' retrograde moves that have downgraded the protection of our unique natural areas and magnificent national parks.

The VNPA is committed to working with the new government to make sure that it does more than just reverse those backward steps. We need to make Victoria once again a leader in nature conservation, as it has been in the past. Ten conservation actions to which the Andrews government has committed are:

- ban cattle grazing in the Alpine National Park and River Red Gum national parks
- rule out large-scale private development in national parks, and cancel the Victorian Government's ability to grant 99-year leases in parks
- review lease arrangements for a hotel and spa development at the Quarantine Station (Point Nepean National Park)
- review the Coalition's flawed native vegetation regulations
- review the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act*, and institute a state-wide biodiversity strategy to protect Victoria's habitats and wildlife
- add the nationally significant Anglesea Heathlands to the Great Otway National Park
- develop a new *Marine and Coastal Act*, and institute five-yearly State of the Bays reporting to monitor the health of our coasts, bays and waterways
- develop a strategy to improve our riparian land and rivers, and establish a Yarra River Protection Act
- support Trust for Nature to facilitate private land protection and rehabilitation, and support Landcare facilitators in protecting our environment
- provide \$5 million to establish and upgrade new facilities in parks and reserves across the state, and \$19 million to build the Grampians Peaks Trail.

Park Watch (Vic. NPA), No. 260 (March 2015)

More than just talk

The Nature Conservation Council (NCC) Annual Conference is the forum for 130-plus member organisations to review conservation policy and campaigns. The conference facilitates evolutionary processes for the NSW environment movement that was for some years fairly static. The conference now includes training, celebrations of success, presentations by member groups and awards for volunteer conservationists.

The conference is NCC's policymaking vehicle and part of the glue that keeps the movement united in its efforts to defend the natural world. And this year NCC will work to assist its members with National Heritage listing for the Gardens of Stone Stage 2 reserve proposal.

In summary the Colong Foundation's motions passed by the 2014 Conference called on the NSW Government to:

- ensure that the adaptive management technique is used for nature conservation outcomes when applied to national parks and wilderness, and not as a mechanism to justify logging, grazing or horse riding in these precious areas
- ensure that logging and grazing remain banned in national parks and state conservation areas
- require that planned fires in wilderness areas be undertaken only for evidence-based ecological purposes and are annually subject to a regional environmental assessment
- require iconic long-distance walking tracks to be appropriately located and avoid wilderness areas
- re-establish the NPWS as a standalone government agency
- restore the Wollangambe River to health by preventing the discharge of toxic water pollution from Clarence Colliery near Lithgow through the installation of reverse osmosis technology
- adequately fund the Environmental Defender's Office NSW
- prevent further track clearing in declared wilderness for recreational horseriding.

Colong Bulletin, No. 258 (March 2015)

The Coalition announces its vision for agriculture in NSW—native vegetation gets the chop!

The National Parks Association of NSW is disappointed with the Coalition partners' decision to repeal the *Native Vegetation Act*.

'The Liberal/Nationals government has missed the point entirely about looking after the interests of our farming community and wildlife', NPA CEO Kevin Evans said, adding:

Once again they have chosen to pander to the loud, ill-informed minority who have for years bayed to weaken land clearing protections. The ignorant ideology behind this decision will see nature coming off second best once again. The Coalition has denied the community a chance to scrutinise far-reaching changes to the laws that protect nature in NSW. This is not just a rural issue because there is more at stake here than increasing agricultural production. A major wave of wildlife extinctions is now occurring in our agricultural zone and this decision will seal the fate of many more native species. Native vegetation also provides a range of on-farm benefits such as the control of land degradation, salinity and soil erosion; shelter and shade for stock; and habitat for birds and other organisms that prey on pests and pollinate crops. It protects livestock, particularly lambs and calves, from heat and cold stress.

The NSW *Native Vegetation Act* has been an undoubted success for sustainable agriculture and biodiversity, by effectively reducing broad-scale clearing in NSW since its implementation in 2003. Over that time clearing due to agriculture declined by 68 per cent, while clearing due to development declined by 57 per cent.

In Queensland, where native vegetation clearing rules were significantly weakened in 2014, 275,000 hectares were cleared from Queensland in the last financial year, which was a tripling of land clearing rates since 2010. This should send alarm bells ringing to what we can expect in NSW with the *Native Vegetation Act* repealed. Seventy-five per cent of the state's land resources and extracted water are already used by agriculture, while land protected for nature represents less than 9 per cent. Nature needs half, not less than 10 per cent. There are 970 plants and animals listed as threatened with extinction in NSW. Loss of habitat is one of the primary threats implicated in this appalling record. Scrapping the *Native Vegetation Act* would undermine the benefits of the Coalition's promised \$100 million investment in threatened species recovery. This is a disaster for nature and it will undoubtedly lead to less productive agriculture industry.

www.npansw.org.au published 26 March 2015

(continued on page 20)

Conservation groups welcome Coalition's \$8 million commitment to Great Eastern Ranges conservation projects

The NSW NPA and the NSW NCC have welcomed today's announcement that a Coalition government would invest \$8 million in new conservation projects along the Great Eastern Ranges (GER) corridor. The Great Eastern Ranges Initiative aims to stop the further extinctions of native species in eastern Australia by creating a 3,600 km corridor from north Queensland to Victoria that would enable species to move, adapt to climate change and survive. It draws together more than 180 community, industry, government and non-government organisations in the conservation of our natural heritage by promoting landscape-scale connectivity and high-priority biodiversity projects within the corridor.

'This funding will continue to support on-ground works that protect environmental values and biodiversity by providing grants for community-driven, on-ground conservation efforts along the GER corridor', NPA CEO Kevin Evans said. 'This commitment will help deliver the next phase of the Great Eastern Ranges conservation initiative, continuing the bipartisan political support for GER since the Carr Labor government established the Great Eastern Ranges Initiative in 2007.'

Currently there are nine regional partnerships along the GER that are delivering the positive environmental outcomes for local bushland and the corridor as a whole. Environment Minister Rob Stokes also announced a Coalition government would provide \$300,000 over 2 years to fund long-term plans and sustainable funding for the Great Eastern Ranges Initiative.

'These funds will help secure a sustainable future for the partnership that has led a globally significant conservation success story for the past 8 years', NCC CEO Kate Smolski said. 'The private-public partnership model that manages GER has international influence. This funding will support the ecosystems of the ranges corridor that provide multiple services, such as carbon storage, the provision and regulation of fresh water, and cultural benefits.'

www.npansw.org.au published 24 March 2015

The Drip Gorge added to the Goulburn River National Park

The NPA of NSW has warmly welcomed the state government's long-awaited

decision to permanently protect The Drip, an iconic sandstone formation near Mudgee, by adding it to the Goulburn River National Park. In this rare win for the NSW environment, The Drip and Corner Gorge are now saved from coal mining. The hydrology of the area is still under some threat and Moolarben Coal will be required to keep an eye on this into the future. NSW Environment Minister Rob Stokes announced today the Baird government would add a 50-hectare parcel of bushland that includes the Drip Gorge to Goulburn River National Park.

'This is a marvellous result for the local campaign run by the Mudgee District Environment Group and the Central West Environment Council for more than a decade', NPA CEO Kevin Evans said. 'The Drip is a much-loved natural wonder of the Central West, and deserves the protection the Coalition has now delivered to the NSW community.'

www.npansw.org.au published 19 March 2015

The Tarkine

There has been a temporary reprieve for Tasmania's Tarkine. A Federal Court judge has ruled that controversial 4WD tracks should remain closed to recreational vehicles to protect Indigenous heritage. The Liberals while in opposition had vowed to overturn the Labor Government's ban on 4WD vehicles south of Sandy Cape (plus several other tracks). As soon as it took office, the Liberal Government overturned the ban.

In December 2014, the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre took legal action and successfully obtained an interim injunction which ordered the Parks and Wildlife Service not to issue any permits until the full hearing of the Federal Court. The Arthur Pieman Conservation Area is rich in Aboriginal history, including middens, rock engravings and rare hut depressions. It remains to be seen if Parks and Wildlife can prevent the ongoing, illegal activities that have been so destructive. This Federal Court injunction represents a first step to forever remove this activity that is irrevocably destroying parts of this wondrous coast. Recently, a small delegation to the Environment Minister, Mr Groom, suggested he visit the area with TNPA members to inspect the colossal damage first hand, but he has given no indication that he would do so.

Postscript

On 11 February 2014 the ABC News reported that a number of 4WD vehicles with covered numberplates had been filmed driving on tracks

south of the Interview River – a blatant contravention of a law of many years but this time was the first that vehicles were seen with taped-over numberplates. Having had further cutbacks to staff numbers, the Parks and Wildlife Service is in no position to monitor compliance.

TNPA News, No. 20 (Summer 2015)

Tasmanian wilderness at risk: a call to action

The concept of wilderness dates back to at least the Old Testament and is probably much older. For instance, the Aborigines in Australia have long had their 'quiet areas'. Great progress has been made with wilderness conservation in Australia but now some of our best-known wilderness areas are under threat. If the Tasmanian Government gets its way, it will extinguish the six wilderness areas, totalling over 1.3 million hectares in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. This proposal is made in the Draft 2014 Management Plan for the World Heritage Area, which has now closed for comment.

There is a strong community suspicion, including in the Aboriginal community, that the government's motive for the elimination of the wilderness areas is a commercial tourism development mindset, but how has it set about justifying this proposal?

The government's main tactic has been to ignore the internationally accepted definition in the IUCN's 'Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories'. The IUCN description of a category '1b-wilderness area' makes it very clear that the objectives of a wilderness area include:

Indigenous communities to maintain their traditional lifestyle and customs, and protection of the relevant cultural and spiritual values and non-material benefits to indigenous and non-indigenous populations such as solitude, respect for sacred sites, respect for ancestors, etc.

Given the government's pro-commercial tourism agenda, it is not surprising that no reference is made to this definition. Another aspect of the proposed turnaround is that it is contrary to the obligations Tasmania accepted when in 1997 it signed the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement and included a definition of the wilderness in the schedule to the *Tasmanian National Parks and Reserves Management Act*. No mention of this is made in the draft

(concluded on page 21)

PARKWATCH (continued)

plan and it appears that the government is prepared to ignore this commitment.

The wilderness areas of western and central Tasmania exist for two reasons. First, the way the Aboriginal people respected and conserved their lands over some 38,000 years and second the 50 years of effort that modern conservationists put into protecting these areas against threats of massive incursions such as the Lower Gordon Power Scheme and the building of a road to Port Davey. The Wilderness World Heritage Area represents a continuing story between the past and the present, a bridge which the Tasmanian Government is evidently prepared to destroy in time. It is to be hoped that people from all over Australia will help prevent this from happening.

Colong Bulletin, No. 258
(March 2015)

Baird's tentative steps towards marine protection

NSW NPA CEO Kevin Evans has cautiously welcomed today's long-

anticipated announcement from the Baird government of its intention to improve marine protection in the Sydney metropolitan region pending results of yet another study.

A year-long study will begin in early 2015 into new conservation areas for the Sydney region that could lead to the creation of marine protection parks in an area stretching from Newcastle to Wollongong. This would be a great outcome for Sydney's marine environment. While successive NSW governments have dithered for years about increasing marine protection, the global goal posts have changed significantly. At the recent World Parks Congress meeting in Sydney, where the government had been expected to declare its intention to create a marine park for Sydney, but didn't, the IUCN made the recommendation to urgently increase its global target and strictly protect 30 per cent of each marine habitat by 2030. [With] less than 6 per cent of NSW waters strictly protected, we still have a lot more work to do.

The 11 sites in the Hawkesbury Shelf bioregion which are to be monitored in the study announced by the Baird government, include parts of Sydney Harbour, Broken Bay, Botany Bay and Port Hacking. These areas would need to be afforded full sanctuary protection and be sufficiently large if they are to be anything other than 'paper parks'. Environment Minister Rob Stokes said the research at these priority sites would 'inform decision-making about the creation of an integrated marine protected area along the metro coast by 2016'. We will hold the Minister to his word, Mr Evans said.

www.npansw.org.au/index.php/campaigns

Compiled by Hazel Rath

ABC on the High Country

ABC Television's weekly rural program, *Landline*, on Sunday 22 February featured the importance of conservation and restoration in the High Country of NSW near where the Murray River has its beginnings.

In the 1950s and 60s Alec Costin of the CSIRO was involved in researching and documenting the damage that sheep and cattle grazing were causing in the catchment area. Eventually grazing leases were withdrawn and the area declared a national park. It is sad that Victoria still allows cattle grazing in its High Country.

Alec Costin, Roger Good and a third scientist were recently taken by the ABC

rural team to Kosciuszko National Park to view the area they studied 60 years ago. Grasslands have returned and the wonderful wildflowers bloom each summer, but erosion scars are still evident and the wetlands are being damaged by growing herds of feral horses. The depth of the love Alec has for the alpine area was very evident in the program, as it is in the books he has written about the flora of the High Country.

I viewed this program only 3 days after listening to ranger Rob Gibbs, Senior Project Manager, NPWS NSW, speak at the NPA February general meeting about the alarming increase in

feral horse numbers in Kosciuszko National Park and the damage they cause to the landscape (see report page 5). There is a very vocal pro-horse group putting pressure on the NSW Government and conservation groups who wish the culling program to increase.

Surely the protection of our precious natural landscape is the most important factor to consider.

Fiona MacDonald Brand

NPA ACT Annual General Meeting

Nominations for NPA office bearers and committee 2015-16

Nominations are sought for office bearers and committee members to be elected at the AGM on 20 August 2015.

We nominate

for the position of in NPA ACT in 2015-16

Proposed by (signature) Seconded by (signature)

I accept the nomination (signature) Date

[This form can be photocopied or scanned and used for nominations.]



NPA notices

National Parks Association Calendar

| | June | July | August | September |
|--|----------|----------|-----------------------|-----------|
| Public holidays | Mon 8 | — | — | — |
| General meetings | Thurs 18 | Thurs 16 | Thurs 20 ¹ | Thurs 17 |
| Committee meetings | Tues 2 | Tues 7 | Tues 4 | Tues 1 |
| Gudgeny Bush Regeneration ² | Sat 13 | Sat 11 | Sat 8 | Sat 12 |

Further details: 1. NPA ACT Annual General Meeting.
2. GBRG. Meet at Namadgi Visitor Centre 9:15am, or Yankee Hat car park 10:00am.

New members of the association



The NPA ACT welcomes the following new member:

Celina Smith.

We look forward to seeing everyone at NPA activities.



Membership fees are now due

You will soon receive a letter in the mail asking for membership renewal and donations. Part of the letter is a printout of the details we store confidentially on our membership database and we are asking members to check that the information we have (name/s, address, phone number/s, membership type, joining date, your interests in supporting the NPA ACT, email address/es, an indication whether you want to receive our electronic newsletter *Burning Issues* and whether you want to receive the *Bulletin* through Australia Post, in digital format, or in both of those formats) is still correct.

Please take the time to check your details, and correct if necessary, and send the whole form with your membership dues (and donation) back to the office by post – for cheques and money orders. For payment by Mastercard or Visa credit card our treasurer has set up an online facility on ‘Trybooking’, and online bank transfer is also possible. Detailed instructions are in the letter. We ask you still to send the completed form back to the office with an indication of payment method, even if you have already paid online. It can also be scanned and sent to admin@npaact.org.au by email.

Thank you all for your cooperation.

Sonja Lenz, Secretary



Notice of Annual General Meeting

Thursday 20 August 2015

Business: Minutes of the AGM 2014

- President’s Report
- Financial Report
- Appointment of Auditor
- Election of Office-bearers and Committee
- Any other business

Note: all office-bearer and committee positions become vacant at the AGM.

Nominations for office-bearer and committee positions for the coming year are welcome. Please copy or scan the nomination form on page 21.



About the *Bulletin*

This *Bulletin* was prepared by:
Editor, Philip Gatenby with help from the *Bulletin* team
Sub-editor, Ed Highley
Presentation, Adrienne Nicholson.

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

If possible keep contributions to no more than 1,000 words.

Deadline for the September 2015 issue: 31 July 2015.

Cover photographs

Front cover

Main photo. Sentry Box Rock, Namadgi National Park, May 2015.
Photo by Jan Gatenby.

Insets. Left. Mike Smith tackles a briar near Max and Berts Hut (article page 8).
Photo by Max Lawrence.

Centre. Upper Murray River – no habitat for frogs any more, and hard for people to collect drinking water (article page 3).
Photo by Esther Gallant.

Right. Jenny McGrath and Margaret Power at Goondra Hut (article page 10).
Photo by Brian Slee.

Back cover

Top. Gudgenby Valley, Namadgi National Park, May 2014.
Photo by Philip Gatenby.

Bottom. Frenchmans Cap reflected in Lake Tahune, Franklin–Gordon Wild Rivers National Park, Tasmania, April 2015.
Photo by Brian Slee.

General Meetings

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



Thursday 18 June

Forest fires in British Columbia; lessons for the ACT

Brett McNamara

Regional Manager, National Parks and Catchments

As a member of Australia's largest fire fighting deployment to Canada, Brett reflects on his experience gained, and lessons learned, for application to conditions in the ACT.

Thursday 16 July

Rural graves in the ACT with focus on Namadgi and Tidbinbilla

Anne Claoue Long

Heritage Consultant

Anne will give an overview of graves in the ACT and focus on Namadgi and Tidbinbilla and the circumstances and social histories and reasons for burial and associations with people and places. There will be some reference to aboriginal graves and known stories.

The outings program may develop walks to some of these in the future.

Thursday 20 August

Annual General Meeting

to be followed by

South America

Mike Smith

NPA member

Reminiscences and slides on South America: Easter Island, Inca Trails, Los Glaciers, Torres del Paine and Patagonia.

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) |
| | rod.blackdog@gmail.com | |
| <i>Vice-President</i> | Vacant | |
| <i>Secretary</i> | Sonja Lenz | 6251 1291 (h) |
| | sonjalenz67@gmail.com | |
| <i>Treasurer</i> | Chris Emery | 6249 7604 (h) |
| | chris.emery@optusnet.com.au | |

Committee members

| | | |
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