



# NPA *Bulletin*

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National Parks Association of the Australian Capital Territory Inc.



**Easter camp at  
Errinundra**



**Third NPA  
Scholarship**



**Nadgigomar  
Nature Reserve**

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

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## From the (retiring) President

The NPA ACT enters a new phase in its existence following its August AGM as it moves ahead without a president. While I believe that an organisation should have a formal leader, the quality of the vice-president and the rest of the committee will ensure that the NPA continues to be a strong voice for the environment. Nevertheless, I also believe that this is a perfect time for someone to take on the president’s role because of the wealth of experience on the committee that will smooth the way for a new leader. So please consider whether this could be an opportunity for you or someone you know to contribute to our essential work.

This coming year will present many opportunities for the NPA. The TAMS Minister recently announced a vision for recreational activities in the ACT. We hope that this will become the first step in the creation of a recreational strategy that will cater for the many recreational needs of Canberra’s population while continuing to safeguard the environmental values of the national park and other conservation reserves.

This year should also see a new draft plan of management for Canberra Nature Park (CNP). A revision to the existing plan of management is well overdue, with CNP being a much larger and more diverse series of conservation units than when the last plan of management was finalised. Maintaining the

currency of plans of management is always an issue for land managers, but the ACT is consistently tardy in updating these important documents. I look forward to the release of the draft CNP plan, as it is an opportunity to restate our case on the importance of the ACT’s Yellow Box–Red Gum grassy woodlands and for recognising this through the creation of a new woodlands national park.

The NPA’s ability to champion such issues is one of the key reasons I was attracted to join it and to accept its presidency. I thoroughly enjoyed my time as president and the companionship of my committee colleagues and the support of the members. I’m looking forward to the next chapter of my involvement with the NPA.



**Rod Griffiths**



## President's Annual Report

Over the years many people have said to me that they admire the way that the NPA ACT is such an active organisation. It is only when you look at the breadth of the activities that our association undertakes in a year that such statements really ring true.

Since our last AGM, these activities have included:

- continuing to campaign for a new national park in the ACT – letters to politicians, meetings with bureaucrats, TV interviews have all been part of our campaign
- campaigning for an integrated conservation agency and for cat containment in the ACT
- striving to ensure feral horses in Kosciuszko National Park are adequately managed. Submissions, letters to the editor and the NSW Government and presentations to the Independent Technical Reference Group on feral horse management have engaged the membership on this issue
- defending the wilderness values of Namadgi National Park through letters to the editor and a radio interview
- supporting a trial of contraception as a kangaroo control measure
- formally launching the installation of new Yerrabi Track signs
- undertaking work parties, near and far
- championing the availability of the ACT's all-terrain wheelchair
- continuing to maintain close relationships with staff at all levels of Parks, Conservation and Lands.

On a more convivial note, the NPA ACT has also celebrated the 30th anniversary of Namadgi National Park, had another successful Gudgenby Art Week, held a marvellous art and historical exhibition at the Namadgi Visitor Centre and enjoyed some great general meeting presentations.

The NPA ACT has continued to support scientific research through its honours scholarship with the ANU. A third excellent recipient, April Suen, recently formally received her scholarship. The scholarship has been a wonderful way of promoting the NPA ACT amongst the students of the ANU Fenner School. To build on that promotion, the NPA ACT now offers complimentary membership to Fenner School students.

To better understand its membership the NPA ACT conducted a members' survey. The results of the survey have been helping to guide some of the NPA ACT's activities.

A new edition of the *Field Guide to the Native Trees of the ACT* is well progressed and work is underway on a book on ACT butterflies. It was a great privilege to accept the transfer of ownership of the original line drawings for the first edition of the tree guide from the artist, Betsy Jane Osborne.

A new Cultural Sub-committee has been established, with David Large as the convener. This also incorporates the excellent work performed by The Friends of Glenburn.

None of this work happens without

the support of the committee, sub-committees and members.

The *NPA Bulletin* continues to be a truly wonderful publication and thanks must go to the various editors over the past year – Max Lawrence, Philip Gatenby, Judy Kelly, Kevin McCue and Sonja Lenz. As always, the editors have enjoyed strong support from Adrienne Nicholson, Ed Highley and Hazel Rath.

Sonja, as well as being the NPA's Secretary, is a key worker in our office which has run smoothly through the efforts of Annette Smith, Debbie Cameron, Lorraine Ball, Kathy Saw and David Large.

Our various sub-committees have been ably convened by Mike Smith (Outings), Kevin McCue (Publications), Graham Scully (Promotion and Engagement) and Martin Chalk (Work Parties). Like the Environment Sub-committee, which I convene, these sub-committees rely heavily on the work of their members.

I would like to thank all the committee members of the past year, the NPA ACT's speakers and all those members who volunteered during the year to set up the general meetings and to organise the catering for those meetings.

It has been a great honour to be the NPA ACT's president for the past 5 years and I thank all members for their support and trust over this time.

**Rod Griffiths**

## Treasurer's Report – Financial Year 2014–15

Our total equity has increased by 1.8 per cent compared with the previous financial year. Membership subscriptions fell by 3.3 per cent and donations increased by 3.8 per cent. We received another wonderful \$10,000 donation

which more than covers the cost of our ANU Fenner School Honours scholarship for another year. Our profits from book sales were negligible. During the year we moved our bank accounts from the Commonwealth Bank to MECU (now

Bank Australia) to divest from fossil fuel support. Our Auditor had no queries or comments.

**Chris Emery**

## Citation for the 2015 National Parks Association President's Award

Di Thompson's impassioned campaigning for the removal of feral horses in Australia's high country is simply one of her many activities over decades for the protection of the natural environment. Di has organised many field trips to Kosciuszko National Park (KNP), has participated in Orange Hawkweed work parties, koala searches and hut maintenance, as well as advocacy relating to high-impact and inappropriate use of natural areas.

She has been an environmental advocate on a number of bodies: the Southern Ranges Region Advisory Committee, the Cooma Monaro Bushfire Management Committee, the Perisher Range Resorts Environmental Management System Committee and the Murrumbidgee Environment and Water Advisory Group. Importantly for the ACT, Di was also a member of the Namadgi Interim Board of Management.

Di has shared her love of the natural

environment through her photography and book publication – her *'Ring of Fire 2003'* is an important part of the ACT's collective memory of the effects of the 2003 bushfires.

Di's drive has inspired many others to join the fight for the protection of the environment. She is a worthy recipient of the inaugural 2015 NPA ACT President's Award.

*(AGM items continued next page)*



## Meeting report

Outgoing President Rod Griffiths welcomed members, especially life members and guests, to the AGM on Thursday 20 August 2015. The meeting was well attended, with nearly 40 members present.

Rod emphasised that he had very much enjoyed leading the NPA ACT for the past 5 years; the committee, the sub-committees and working groups, as well as individual members had contributed to a whole list of NPA achievements, and he thanked everyone involved.

The following were some of the major activities: campaigning for a new national park, an integrated ACT government conservation agency, cat containment in the ACT; advocating adequate management of feral horses in Kosciuszko National Park; and defending the wilderness values of Namadgi National Park. See Rod's full report on page 3.

Treasurer Chris Emery distributed copies of the audited annual financial statements and commented on the

balance sheet and profit and loss statement. He noted that NPA ACT had transferred from the Commonwealth Bank to Bank Australia (previously Bank MECU) in an action to divest from fossil fuel support. See Chris's short financial report on page 3.

Two members were deservedly honoured this year: Max Lawrence is NPA's latest Honorary Life Member and Di Thompson is the inaugural recipient of the President's Award. Read the citations on page 3 and below.

The election of the new committee was ably chaired by Returning Officer Bruce Boreham.

Your new management committee is:

Vice-President:  
Christine Goonrey  
Secretary:  
Sonja Lenz  
Treasurer:  
Chris Emery  
Immediate Past President:  
Rod Griffiths

Committee members:

Esther Gallant  
George Heinsohn  
David Large  
Kevin McCue  
Quentin Moran  
Mike Smith.

There was no nomination for the President's position, a problem the committee will have to manage in the year ahead.

Intrepid traveller Mike Smith then entertained the audience with a slide show and reminiscences of two trips he and Annette undertook in South America in 2006 and 2008.

The lavish supper provided by the committee and other members and Adrienne's traditional AGM gluhwein topped off the 2015 Annual General Meeting.

Sonja Lenz

## New Life Member

### Nomination of Max Lawrence for Honorary Life Membership



Max is a long-standing member of the NPA ACT. He has served twice on the NPA Management Committee, and has been, at other times and over many years, convener of the Outings Sub-committee and Editor of the *NPA Bulletin*.

On the Management Committee, Max was Secretary for 4 years and continues to volunteer to write the minutes of the general meetings as a stand-in for the current secretary.

Max was convener of the Outings Sub-committee from 1996 to 2001. He led many day and pack walks himself. These were particularly popular because

of Max's natural affability and good rapport with his co-walkers. He would never let a weaker walker languish at the end of the line, but with encouraging words and necessary breaks would ensure that everyone was able to finish the walk at their own pace.

Max's record as Editor of the *NPA Bulletin* from 2008 to 2014 is outstanding. His writing and other communication skills and experience ensured that every issue was relevant, informative and interesting. Also, his editorship saw the transformation of the *Bulletin* into an even more engaging full-colour publication. Mention must be made too that Max's [and Marie's] conviviality turned the *Bulletin* mail-stuffing sessions at their place into memorable social events.

The present *Bulletin* Working Group is secure in the knowledge that Max is there to give advice (much of it enshrined in his detailed *Bulletin* production notes for new editors) and, if the need arises, can be called on to edit future issues.

Max is a prolific photographer of NPA events and many of his photos have been used in the *Bulletin*, in displays and in the Association's magnum opus *Namadgi: A National Park for the National Capital*.

As well as contributing many photographs for the Namadgi book, Max played a crucial role as manager of members' photos submitted for the book. From the multitude of members' photos he distilled the best for each of the book's chapters – a huge task.

Max has also been a highly committed participant in NPA work parties over many years. He has worked hard in Namadgi National Park and ACT nature reserves, and several NSW national parks, and is a strong force in the Glenburn/Burbong project.

Given his extensive, exemplary and unique contributions to the National Parks Association of the ACT, we are delighted to nominate Max Lawrence for Honorary Life Membership.

*This proposal was carried at the meeting with acclamation.*

Photo by Sabine Friedrich.

## Call for 24-hour cat containment strategy

[From the Conservation Council  
*Weekly Wrap* 31 July 2015]

Australia's first Threatened Species Commissioner, Gregory Andrews, said all cat owners should keep their pets contained 24 hours a day, saying it makes them happier and healthier, and

saves native animals. The federal government's finalised threat abatement plan for feral cats will seek public support for expanded '24-hour containment requirements for domestic cats, particularly close to identified conservation areas of significance' as a high priority.

It is important to note that the Australian Veterinary Association (ACT Branch) is supportive of cat containment. The RSPCA position is similar: see their online knowledge base, and their opinion piece 'Containing cats is good for wildlife and good for cats as well', *Canberra Times* 16 January 2015.

## ACT Government welcomes \$625,000 boost to protect native species

[From the Conservation Council  
*Weekly Wrap* 31 July 2015]

Minister for Territory and Municipal Services Shane Rattenbury said that the contributions from the Australian Government would support three important ACT environmental projects.

'The Australian Government will contribute \$600,000 to improve and expand the Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary that provides a predator-free environment for threatened species including the Eastern Bettong and the

New Holland Mouse. Expanding the sanctuary is vital in protecting these species', Mr Rattenbury said.

'This will add to the \$900,000 contribution from the ACT Government from the 2015–16 budget and is another welcome boost to the Bettong Bungalow campaign launched last month to raise funds for the expansion of the Mulligans Flat Sanctuary.

'A small proportion of the funds will also be used to support the restoration of ACT natural temperate grassland sites. The ACT Government is already

conducting an extensive program of work to support threatened grassland species, including the Grassland Earless Dragon, the Striped Legless Lizard, the Golden Sun Moth and a number of threatened plant species.'

A \$20,000 contribution will also be provided to help fund Northern Corroboree Frog enclosures. The five specialised amphibian enclosures will protect this critically endangered species at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve to help re-establish wild breeding populations.

## Characterising the Australian dingo(es)

New genetic research at the University of NSW suggests that Australia is home to not one but two types of dingo. Professor Alan Wilton began the work to define a purebred dingo back in 1995, but on his untimely death in 2011, the work was continued by geneticist Professor Bill Ballard and his PhD student Kylie Cairns.

For the first time, research is concluding that there is genetic subdivision within the dingoes with at least two different lineages of dingoes within Australia. One lineage exists in the north-west, from north of Brisbane to Perth, while another, much more recent lineage, exists south of Brisbane to Victoria, and particularly in alpine areas.

A second conclusion is that dingoes inhabited Australia well before the earliest fossils, 3,500 years ago. Professor Ballard suggests that there were two independent introductions. One may have occurred when New Guinea and Australia were connected by a land bridge, and the other through seafaring traders.

Independent research at the University of Sydney has finally found enough proof to classify the dingo as a species separate from the dog. Dr Mathew Crowther from the Sydney University School of Biological Sciences is the lead author of a study published in

the online *Journal of Zoology*. The research, which sheds new light on the defining physical characteristics of the dingo, also resurrects the species name *Canis dingo*, first published by German naturalist Friedrich Meyer in 1793.

'Now any wild canid – dingo, dog, or hybrid of the two – can be judged against that classification', Dr Crowther said.

'We can also conclusively say that the dingo is a distinctive, Australian wild canid or member of the dog family in its own right, separate from dogs and wolves. The appropriate scientific classification is *Canis dingo*, as they appear not to be descended from wolves, are distinct from dogs and are not a subspecies.'

The physical features that define a dingo are a relatively broad head with a long snout, as well as erect ears and a bushy tail.

'Distinguishing dingoes from their hybrids (crossbreeds) with feral dogs is a practical concern. Current policies in parts of Australia support the conservation of dingoes but the extermination of "dingo-dogs", which are considered a major pest because they kill livestock', said Dr Crowther.

Mike Letnic, a co-author on the paper from the University of NSW, said: 'Many Australians like to think that dingoes are always yellow and that animals with any

other colouration are not dingoes. This is untrue.

One of our insights is that coat colour does not define an animal as a dingo, dog or a hybrid. We found that dingoes can be tan, dark, black and tan, white, or can have the sable colouration typical of German Shepherd dogs.'

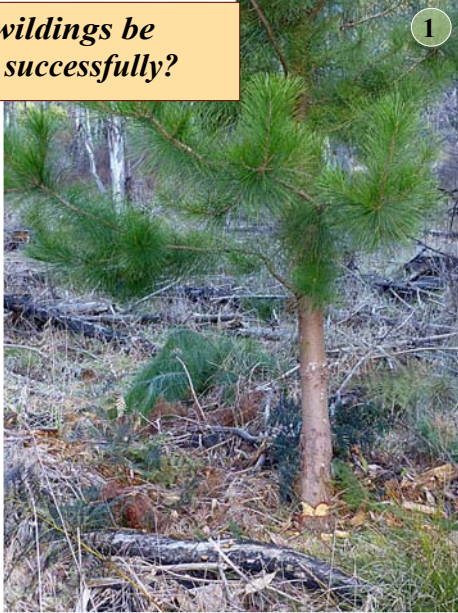
Australia's largest land predator, dingoes have an important role in conservation through their regulation of species such as kangaroos, wallabies and invasive red foxes. A sounder understanding of dingo numbers, based on this clearer identification, will help our understanding of their role in biodiversity.

Dingoes bred in isolation until the arrival of domestic dogs after European settlement. 'That made distinguishing dingoes from dogs problematic, as the DNA tests and analyses of their physical structure were based on dingoes whose ancestry was not known. They were either captive animals or wild animals of uncertain ancestry', said Dr Crowther.

In order to define a purebred dingo, dingo remains from pre-European settlement housed at the Western Australian Museum will be analysed at the University of Adelaide's DNA laboratory.

# Citizen science – radiata ringbarking

*Can pine wildings be ringbarked successfully?*



This question came up a few years ago among participants in the Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group (GBRG): If we find a radiata wilding in remote bushland that is too big to be felled with hand tools, and might not be reached by a chainsaw for some time, what can we do to prevent it spreading seeds?

When I became aware of the problem my mind went back to the practice of ringbarking, used as an essential tool in clearing forest in the pioneering days of Tasmania (and worldwide of course, before the monster machines of modern forestry were developed). In discussing if the technique could be applied to pines I learnt that it had been tried by the Gudgenby group on a few trees, but the results appeared inconclusive.

That seemed at odds with my understanding of why the hundreds of eucalypts, blackwoods and others I'd seen ringed in my youth had died. But could *Pinus radiata* be different? That I found no specific articles about it on the internet was indicative that it wasn't, and the many general articles – for example, the Wikipedia article titled 'Girdling' (a US term) – are definite that a girdle through the cambium layer *will* kill a woody plant or branch above the girdle. So I thought I'd conduct my own test.

The opportunity came during a work party in Blundells Flat in the eastern-side foothills of the Brindabella Range. I sawed around a wilding a dozen centimetres through, then chopped down to make a continuous channel a few centimetres wide into the pale heartwood. That looked about right, so I ringed another one. But I had neither camera nor GPS, so returned 6 weeks



*Photo series showing the condition of a pine wilding which was ringbarked on 25 June 2012.*

1. After six weeks
2. After six weeks, close up
3. After 16 months – foliage drying out
4. After 3 years – DEAD

*Photos by Rupert Barnett.*

later with them to start a history – then could find only one tree!

Is a sample of one enough to prove a hypothesis about a forest? That might depend on many factors but if we assume that radiata will respond like all other woody (vascular) species then one specimen is enough: the tree can either heal the wound, or it dies.

Three years have passed, and I think that the accompanying photos provide the answer: it's a definite 'yes' – *Pinus radiata* can be killed by ringbarking.

There are a few caveats to observe, however:

- the cuts must be through the sapwood (i.e. the phloem and cambium layer) all the way around
- the gap across the cambium layer must be wide enough to prevent new tissue bridging it. This was highlighted by Ranger Brandon during NPA's recent return to Blundells Flat. He told us of a big radiata, 120 cm in diameter which, when chainsawed by the farmer remained supported in place by its neighbours, just settled neatly onto its stump and was soon grafted back in place, and on-growing happily.
- one must be patient.

There are also a number of reasons why work parties will not be ringbarking all the wildings we find in future, but there might be another big, lonely one somewhere out there ...

**Rupert Barnett**



# When the wattle flowers



## An investigation into the future of Aboriginal Ranger groups in Australia

The guest speaker at NPA's May general meeting was Bhiemie Eckford-Williamson, winner of NPA's 2014 scholarship for an Honours year student at ANU's Fenner School of Environment and Society. Bhiemie is the second holder of the NPA Scholarship, the first being Amy Macris in 2013 for her work on genetic diversity of alpine tree frogs in Australia. Amy's research was summarised in the September 2014 issue of the *NPA Bulletin*.



Bhiemie presented his research results in a very mature and engaging manner, backed up by an excellent PowerPoint display – all very impressive and, of course, in line with his First Class Honours academic performance. How could he possibly disappoint?

Bhiemie's research topic was to investigate prospects and future

directions for Aboriginal Ranger programs in Australia. A young Indigenous man originally from the Brewarrina area of New South Wales, Bhiemie researched in considerable depth the cultural and philosophical differences between Western approaches to managing land and the environment, and Indigenous approaches to Caring for Country. To do this he took three case studies of Aboriginal Ranger groups – two in the Northern Territory working out of Borrooloola and our own ACT Murumbung Yurung Murra Ranger group – and compared them with the concept and operation of the Landcare program. Bhiemie spent some weeks working with each of the groups in the field and discussing his work with them.

It was found that, while there were many similarities between the Landcare and Aboriginal Ranger programs, Landcare was a clearly understood and accepted program that allowed it to expand nationally and be supported by successive governments. The Aboriginal Ranger programs, however, are less well understood by the wider public, and this makes them vulnerable to changing political and economic circumstances. In examining this problem, Bhiemie concluded that the key to the success of the three case studies lay where the three pillars of education, environmental care and cultural practice came together, on Country. His thesis concludes:

*Exploring future pathways of these Ranger groups through case studies demonstrates that Aboriginal Ranger staff identify moving to independent organisations as the next progression*

in the life of these programs. It highlights also the integral role young Aboriginal people play in the success of these initiatives. This thesis finishes by recommending investing in these future leaders in order to create sustainable organisations.

Bhiemie has been awarded a scholarship to further study indigenous issues at the University of Victoria in British Columbia. He leaves for Canada in September and, in the meantime, is working with the Murrumbung Yurung Murra Rangers. We look forward to his return and a rewarding future in (and for) Australia.

**Max Lawrence**

*Photos from the May general meeting showing the attentive audience (above) and the speaker Bhiemie (left).*

*Photos by Sabine Friedrich.*

“When the Wattle Flowers” is an expression that I learnt during my time working with the Murumbung Yurung Murra Rangers. It is symbolic of the relationships Ngannawal people have with their Country. I first heard this expression from Senior Ngannawal Ranger Adrian Brown, who learnt it from his father Carl Brown, a *Murringe* (Senior Cultural Man). I thank them for allowing me to use this expression as the title of my thesis ...

‘All three case studies have demonstrated that successful Ranger groups are symptomatic of a healthy, actively lived culture. This thesis has proved that a healthy Ranger program is intrinsically linked to healthy culture, just as there is yellow belly in the river when the wattle flowers.’

**Bhiemie Eckford-Williamson**

We are all visitors to this time, this place. We are just passing through.

Our purpose here is to observe, to learn, to grow, to love ... and then we return home.

**Aboriginal proverb**

The NPA Honours Scholarship for 2015 has been awarded to April Suen, who will be *‘Investigating the effect of genetic diversity on population dynamics in bettongs in the ACT’*.

*Right. April Suen and her parents, with NPA's Rod Griffiths and Chris Emery. Photo by Sabine Friedrich.*



# Climbing Mount Veve, Solomon Islands

Mount Veve is the highest peak on the rim of the crater of the extinct volcano that formed Kolombangara Island in the western province of Solomon Islands. In November 2014, I visited friends Meredith and Pete, Australian Volunteers International (AVI) volunteers for the Kolombangara Island Biodiversity Conservation Association (KIBCA). While there I accompanied them on an ascent of Mount Veve to experience the cloud forests that are a key conservation feature of the rainforests on the island peaks and to see the walking tracks up the mountain and the cultural features along the route.



*A view across the Kolombangara Island volcanic crater from near 'the first camp site'. Photo by John Brickhill.*

Kolombangara Island is home to many species of plants and animals unique to this region. There are some birds and many species of frogs endemic to the island. KIBCA's role is to manage the 20,000 hectare conservation area that takes in all the land on the island above 400 m. This area includes rainforests, spectacular cloud forests, over 80 rivers, and a volcanic caldera. Mount Veve, which is the second highest peak in Solomon Islands, is one of a number of peaks around the caldera rim.

The majority of the area below 400 m on Kolombangara has been clear-felled and is now forestry plantation. These forestry activities have had a considerable environmental impact, and have, for the most part, brought only limited benefits to local communities. In 2008 the local people signed a community conservation agreement to protect the lands above 400 m. While this offered some protection it had no legal standing. In 2012 the Solomon Islands Government passed legislation enabling the establishment of protected areas such as national parks and nature reserves, but as yet no protected areas have been declared.

To prepare for our walk, Meredith engaged the most experienced guide on the island, Moffatt Faneri, and he brought his nephew Leric as a porter. Through KIBCA we had access to three two-person tents, two sleeping mats for four visitors, a single aluminium cooking pot, a few mugs, plates and cutlery items and one large pack. I had no expectation of this walk before I left, so my preparations for what was expected to be a 3-day walk were minimal, using my day pack, two small water bottles, an

umbrella/walking stick, a minimal change of clothes, and a cotton rug for sleeping. Our food supplies were mainly what we could find on the island, and in local markets, being rice and tins of tuna (these being Solomons staples), dried biscuits, dried noodles, small amounts of cheese, bananas and a paw paw. As well we had some nuts and lollies that I had brought from Australia – these items are unavailable on Kolombangara.

*... temperatures of about 30°C and high humidity*

Kolombangara Island is 8 degrees south of the equator, so the weather almost year round has temperatures of about 30°C and high humidity, and rain at any time of the year. I found these conditions more uncomfortable than the dry 40°C+ that I had experienced in summer in western NSW. Although we could expect a slight fall in temperatures with some altitude, our guide talked about some of the porters being cold on the mountain, but it may have been that they only wear light clothes, were wet and the temperature had dropped to 20°.

The most extreme weather feature is the rainfall: the upper parts of the route we were following had been found by Andrew Cox (AVI's first volunteer to KIBCA and later CEO of NPA NSW). While at Kolombangara, Andrew explored walking routes into the crater, with its spectacular river and waterfalls, and up to the crater rim. He told me later that he did this walk in 3 days of constant heavy rain.

The role of the guide is to carry his own pack, locate the track, clear regrowth using a bush knife (the universal tool of Solomon Islands), find water supplies on

the steep slopes, prepare a camp site, light a fire in rainforest conditions and cook the dinner, all for 200 Solomon Island dollars (about A\$30) per day. The porter carried the tents, sleeping mats and cooking pot and his own equipment, and went down steep slopes to tiny waterholes to fill our water bottles, all for \$SI150 per day. Walking the track with a big pack, negotiating slippery tree roots, and scrambling over fallen trees was all done in rubber thongs, the universal local footwear in the Solomons.

To get an early start we travelled to Imbu Rano lodge for an overnight stop. (The usual travel method is to have eight people in one ute: the open back is a good place for a view and a cooler breeze.) The name Imbu Rano comes from the local language imbu for mist and Mount Rano is the 1,698 m peak on the crater rim visible from the lodge. The small ecolodge is part of the work of KIBCA. Two walking tracks start here, one into the crater and the other up the mountain. At 400 m elevation it was a little cooler than the lowlands, and the evening view from the lodge veranda was of masses of cloud over the rainforest, and after dark there was an incredible chorus of frogs.

In the first light of morning, we watched as the cloud cleared away to reveal distant mountains, with incredibly steep slopes on the inside walls of the crater picked out by the rising sun. After breakfast of a cup of tea and a banana, our group of six set off. There has been considerable research into the rainforest by the American Museum of Natural History and, more recently, bird biologists from Taiwan, so the narrow path from the lodge was clear of fallen timber, but was a constant uphill slope. The rainforest was reasonably clear at ground level, with huge trees with buttress roots and palms. After about an hour we reached about 550 m where there was a kastom site, a burial mound. Solomon Islands have a history of head hunting and, in the past, most people lived in the forest rather than along the coast as is common today. However, I was unsure if this burial site was of victims of head-hunting raiding parties, or slain members of a raiding party.

*(continued next page)*



## Climbing Mount Veve, Solomon Islands *(continued)*

After another hour of uphill we reached a site featuring a carved stone, one of the few large stones protruding from the forest floor. This stone was used in shaping shell money. A further hour uphill brought us to Pato Kolo hut, a grass hut at Camp 2 at 1,100 m elevation. This grass hut, built using some sawn timber carried up from the lodge and local materials, had been used as a base by researchers, but was falling into disrepair. From this site we could view the western side of the crater of the volcano. On the way up to this hut we had some views to the south from one place: back to the township of Ringgi and over the Blackett Strait to Kohinggo Island, part of the New Georgia group.

*The forests are an outstanding landscape, and habitat to several of Kolombangara's endemic birds and frogs.*

From here the track continued up into the cloud forests, the zone that is almost always shrouded in cloud. These forests are an outstanding landscape, and habitat to several of Kolombangara's endemic birds and frogs. The forests are a tangle of fallen logs, and the ground and trees are covered in an amazing diversity of mosses. The walking track was frequently above the ground over the fallen trees, only apparent when a wrong step meant that you could end up with your leg in a hole up to your knee or thigh. At one stage I was ahead of the group, and the only way to find the track was to look for a handhold or for the small places where some moss had been worn off a tree root.

One section of the track on the edge of the crater rim had views across the crater. The inside of the crater is so steep that landslides are common, shown by the scars where trees were torn away in narrow vertical strips of brown contrasting with the constant green of the forest.

*to get to Mount Veve meant traversing around the crater rim, a knife-edged ridge*

After 2 hours walk from Pato Kolo we reached the summit of Mount Tepalamenggutu at 1,708 m, and with Mount Veve at 1,779 m we were almost at the highest elevation on the island. However, to get to Mount Veve meant traversing around the crater rim, a knife-edged ridge with many ups and downs. We spent the first 4 hours generally downwards to our overnight destination at Camp 3, but in many places the downhill route was blocked by fallen trees, and to get around some sections

meant 20 m down followed by 20 m up again, so the going was quite strenuous. Moffatt was able to describe some of the birds we were hearing, but even with binoculars it is very difficult to see small olive birds in a green canopy. The Kolombangara White Eye (a silvereye) is an island endemic that would have been a very big 'tick' for me. Some of the parrots in the cloud forest are very small, about 10 cm long, and these also eluded me.

As this route was along a narrow ridge there was no accessible water, so we were short of drinking water until we reached the camp site and its small pool about the size of a handbasin that was a good rock scramble below it. The camp site was small, with a considerable side slope and covered in ferns up to 1.5 m high, which had grown since the previous walkers had been there, which Moffatt thought was about a year before.

*... we fell into our sloping beds of uncomfortable fern fronds for the night*

Moffatt cleared the ferns and we erected two tents as the rest of the group arrived. Moffatt and Leric used their bush skills to find some dryish wood for a fire to cook our dinner of rice and tuna. There was a discussion of the next day's walk: I had seen enough steep slopes and forest so I would have been happy to head for the lodge, but the rest were keen to get to Mount Veve. Very few people have ever been there, and even Moffatt had been there only seven times. With that we fell into our sloping beds of uncomfortable fern fronds for the night.

The next morning we were able to climb up to a lookout spot and see the amazing view of the crater with the ridges picked out by the rising sun. We set out for the climb to Mount Veve, up and over 'false Veve' on the way, reaching the main summit after 2 hours of solid walking, but of course there was no view because of cloud and thick vegetation. Then back to camp for lunch of a few biscuits and pack up the tents. The aim was to return to Camp 2 that night, with the steep climb back up to Tepalamenggutu to start. This included a few places where every possible handhold was needed to pull oneself up and over fallen trees. Again we were



*Our guide, Moffatt, checking for rare plants in the cloud forest.  
Photo by John Brickhill.*

short of water, and Moffatt cut lengths of bamboo for us, each section holding about 200 ml of water. We did not feel guilty throwing these 'drink containers' into the bush.

*When we were short of water ... cut lengths of bamboo each provided about 200 ml*

After a long downhill trek we reached the camp site about dark, and squashed two small tents into space suitable for one. Despite the best efforts of our guides, they were unable to light a fire in the damp conditions so dinner was a handful of walnuts, followed by a night with head and feet on rocks or tree roots. Up to this time we had incredible luck with two days without rain, but that could not hold and it rained overnight and continued to drizzle all morning. With no chance of a fire we had a breakfast of a packet of dried noodles each and a drink of water, packed up and started the downhill trek. The drizzle was held up by the forest canopy so it felt relatively dry. We reached the lodge and found enough food for lunch. By that time some other visitors had arrived for the night, with several freshly caught fish each about one metre long, but we were not invited to share!

For this walk it was essential to have a local guide, in part to recognise their knowledge and assist employment opportunities of this poor country. Our guides were of great assistance on the walk due to their knowledge and unceasing energy in walking in such a landscape.

**John Brickhill**

# Exploring Sunset Mountain in Nadgigomar Nature Reserve

Nadgigomar Nature Reserve lies in the middle of the triangle between Braidwood, Nerriga and Tarago. Its management plan describes it as:

... of regional significance for its plant and animal communities. It contains examples of old growth woodland communities that are rare or not well represented in the reserve system. It has one of the best remaining grassy forest and woodland communities on the southern tablelands and provides significant habitat for several threatened animal species and uncommon plant species.

Perhaps to that list we will in time see the addition of a comment like: 'It is also a reserve that demonstrates the geological process that provides us with ...'. Intrigued? Let me explain.

The reserve consists of three sections – Sunset Mountain, Eastern and Durran Durra, totalling 56 km<sup>2</sup>. They are unconnected, though areas of remaining bush near them provide significant supportive habitat. Most hills are low, though the Durran Durra section contains some incised country in its slopes to the Shoalhaven River. And there's at least one koala there!

However, our interest here is the Sunset Mountain section. It lies off the Mayfield Road, about 30 km north of Braidwood. Mayfield farm gives its name to the trig on the nearby hill (670 m). Two kilometres north is the section's highest hill, Sunset Mountain, at about 745 m. The forest over most of the reserve is a mature mix of eucalypts and casuarinas, open beneath, with the floor covered by a carpet of needles. Flowers on occasional wattles, other shrubs and forbs provide unexpected spots of colour.



Open forest on the ridge. Photo by Rupert Barnett.

In March this year, five of us walked up Sunset Mountain Trail, where bright regrowth from a burn a year earlier provided highlights, onto a side track and south over the gentle top of Sunset Mountain, then into the forest. It was comfortable, untracked walking, past a knoll and a couple of gullies, through a shallow saddle and up a gentle slope to the Mayfair trig. Here a few stumps indicated the directions which the surveyors needed to sight, while the felled trunks provided resting places for our lunchbreak.

We then crossed to the east side. There's a boundary there somewhere, not fenced, and the only tracks are further east on private land. So we turned north-west, back though the still forest towards the summit track, but dropping to explore the western boundary back to the car.

However, that diversion to the east side allowed us to examine an apparently simple feature in a low hill – a shallow gully in deep clay with an interesting grading of colours from a base of near white, through pink, to red. The sheet erosion above showed a

cover of dark rocks and pebbles, often on pale clay with bits of sandstone strata protruding. It was the sort of terrain you might see often on a walk, but to which you give no more attention than is needed to get down the gully without slipping.

But we were lucky to have recently retired geologist David Lindley in the party. David has been more at home exploring for gold and copper orebodies in Papua New Guinea, but he knew enough about coloured clays to give us an exciting insight into this bit of dirt. It was unusual, in that it demonstrated the weathering process that can generate accumulations of iron and aluminium oxides to form laterite soils which in turn can hydrate to become bauxite, the main source of aluminium.

Back home, satellite images showed the gully, and suggested other places where these processes might occur – there were stark white creek beds, odd-coloured hillocks. So I had to go back, in particular to look at the other (western) end of the short ridge from the gully. There the top was a scatter of dark brown ironstone rocks and pebbles on a hard crust; beneath it, a wide eroding face revealed a broken clay surface where the colour graded from dark brown down through lightening reds into pinks and yellows. Lenses of harder rock might have been bedrock, but were remnants of the hardened layer. White clay occurred in a few scattered patches, suggesting a complex history, yet just across the small valley at the base of the slope was an area where similar pale clay was being

*(continued next page)*



Pisolitic cap. Photo by Rupert Barnett.



Mottled horizon. Photo by Rupert Barnett.



Pallid horizon. Photo by Kevin McCue.

## Exploring Sunset Mountain in Nadgigomar Nature Reserve *(continued from previous page)*



eroded off many metres of crumbling white sandstone – the bedrock.

And it all started a long time ago, when the Australian continent was still way down in the Southern Ocean. David tells us why the colours and clays are there:

Laterite and bauxite develop when soluble constituents of parent rocks are leached from the soil profile and less soluble iron and aluminium oxides accumulate. The various horizons in the soil profile demonstrate the effects of a fluctuating watertable. Three of the four horizons that typically develop are readily identifiable in the east-end profile and the fourth is exposed nearby. In this area they developed during the Middle Tertiary (~23–34 million years ago), so what is observed today are eroded remnants.

At the top is a thin *A horizon* of soil with lateritic gravels (pisolites). Under it the *indurated horizon* is quite variable and consists of hard layers of iron oxide (laterite) or, if present, aluminium oxide (bauxite). The indurated horizon was permanently above the watertable, and concentration of oxides is due to upward migration of those oxides.

The bottom *pallid horizon* consists mainly of kaolinite clay. It was always below the watertable, and iron and aluminium migrated upwards from it. The pallid horizon typically occurs directly above bedrock.

The *mottled horizon* occurs between the pallid horizon and the indurated horizon, and is caused by the fluctuating watertable. In the dry season the zone takes on some of the

*Pisolites. Photo by Rupert Barnett.*

properties of the lateritic horizon above and is thus enriched in reddish and yellowish iron oxides. In the wet season, the drab grey and white colours of the lower pallid horizon develop. This is seen at the western end of the ridge.

**Rupert Barnett**

*For David's full article go to the NPA website. Ed*

### NPA ACT Art Week at Gudgenby Cottage



**Saturday 3 – Sunday 11 October**

Art Week at Gudgenby Cottage is a chance for members of NPA ACT to explore their more creative selves through painting, drawing, writing, photography, etc inspired by Namadgi. From a base in the Gudgenby Valley, embark on explorations by day, and enjoy 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

### Parkcare Forum: Community voices in reserve management

**Date: Friday 11 9:00 am to 5:00 pm and  
Saturday 12 September 9:00am to 3:00 pm  
(with a half day Saturday field trip to the Gudgenby Valley).**

**Place: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Centre,  
Yarramundi Reach**

ACT Parkcare is a partner of Landcare, supporting volunteers to care for parks across the ACT. This forum is an opportunity for community volunteers and interested reserve neighbours and users to share experiences and research in ACT parks and reserves with each other, park staff and the wider Landcare network. Register: <http://bit.ly/1MrnWX0>

### Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group

#### Christmas Party

**Frank and Jacks Hut, 12 December**

In conjunction with the usual work party (see Outings Program).  
Stay for Christmas lunch at the hut. Bring a plate to share, drinks provided.  
Meet at Namadgi Visitor Centre, Tharwa at 9:15 am or  
Yankee Hat carpark at 10:00 am.

Contact: Michael Goonrey, 6231 8395 [mjgoonrey@grapevine.com.au](mailto:mjgoonrey@grapevine.com.au)

# Explore nature in NSW with the 'Nature Near Me' app

The 'Nature Near Me' app was launched by the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) in June 2015. This free app may be of interest to NPA members: it can be used to plan a trip to sites with nature as a major feature, or to learn about the natural history of sites in your vicinity.

The web page <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/naturenearme/> describes some of the features. The app covers thousands of sites in NSW (and the ACT), including beaches, forests, national parks, urban sites, places to see wildlife, interesting geology, great views, rivers and wetlands, places where people and nature interact, and more. You can use the inbuilt maps to plan a trip and get information on places with natural interest as you travel. You can store places you want to visit so you can use the app when you are outside mobile range. Now the app is available, members of the public can use it to contribute their own favourite sites.

The app is currently available for iPhone, and will work on an iPad. A version for Android devices is coming soon. The free app is available from the App Store.

A typical site entry has a photo of the site, with many having several photos. Sites are given categories such as

interesting vegetation, regular places for wildlife, coasts, landscapes, endangered communities, or rivers and wetlands, but nearly all sites with nature would fit multiple categories. All sites have a description of what can be found there, and many have more detailed descriptions of the vegetation and wildlife. Other information can include what activities are possible at the site (walking tracks, canoeing, bike riding, car touring etc.) and there is also information on facilities, such as picnic areas, camp sites, tracks, kiosks etc.

Many sites give the nearest town, and have directions from that town to the site, including road surface type, so travellers can be informed of what to expect. Various search functions mean that sites can be searched; for example, sites near Young, so on your next trip you can see

what natural sites are available for birdwatching, or have walking tracks.

The data have been gleaned from the NPWS tourism website and the NPWS website, and some of the sites have fewer data than the majority, which have been contributed by OEH and NPWS staff who have visited the site. The number of sites described is currently biased towards the south-eastern parts of the state (given the distribution of staff contributors), so members of NPA ACT should find plenty of sites of interest, and could contribute more.

I have been contributing sites from the western region to 'Nature Near Me'. For example, the accompanying photograph is of the Mundawaderry cemetery, an interesting site on the Henty-Pleasant Hills road, in the eastern Riverina. This small, historical cemetery contains a sample of Yellow Box grassy woodland (an endangered ecological community) and Kangaroo Grassland. The site has significant plant diversity, with over 80 species recorded. I find it ironic that it is the final resting place of many pioneers who spent their life clearing the bush to develop this rich agricultural land.

**John Brickhill**



*The cemetery at Mundawaderry.  
Photo by John Brickhill.*

## Submission to the ITRG

*The following is from a submission to the Independent Technical Reference Group (ITRG) on the management of wild horses in KNP from a farmer in Western Australia. See also the June 2015 NPA Bulletin. Ed.*

... In November and December 2013, my wife Diane and I walked the Australian Alps walking trail from south to north. It [was] so sad to see the damage that the brumbies are doing to the country, they are destroying not only the environment on which native wild life depends, but the water courses are so badly trodden down and trashed that they were constantly full of sediment (this seriously affects country water supply). The filter we used to purify our drinking water was constantly blocking until we reached the Namadgi National Park. Here there were no brumbies and fresh clean water was plentiful.

It seems that there is legislation put in place to remove all livestock from the mountains, so if no one owns the brumbies they are then classed as vermin and need to be removed, and with this law in place if someone claims to own the brumbies then that is a breach of the law and the same applies – they must be removed to protect this beautiful place. (Isn't it against the law to run livestock in a national park?)

There is a lot of tax payer's money being spent on conservation in the Alps. Here in Western Australia [where] there is a growing salt problem the first thing that is done is the exclusion of all livestock. No one in their right mind would plant vegetation and expect a full recovery without first removing the livestock, the same applies in the alpine regions. The feral horses must be removed now. As it stands it is obvious that the water ways are being desecrated at a very rapid rate.

Both sides of parliament must be courageous and work together to protect the Alps, there is not time to worry about playing politics, it is about the life line of Australia and that is preserving the water supplies for our future generations. This is for all Australians not just a few.

These horses are a by-product of the by-gone alpine grazing industry, they are no more heritage than the cane toad and fall into the same category, they are introduced into this county and are now a pest destroying the alpine regions.

Don't fall for the trap of thinking brumbies are the same as the Mustang. Horses were not in Australia prior to [European] settlement. So hence making brumbies heritage is completely ridiculous.

**Simon House**

# A strange encounter in the Orroral Valley

On a chilly morning in late March, four ladies set off to walk the Nursery Swamp track. On arrival at the car park, we discovered the track was closed due to hazard-reduction burning. We decided instead to walk the Heritage Trail along the Orroral Valley. A good decision as it turned out – and not just for us.

We set off down the valley towards the Orroral camping ground for morning tea. It was a sunny day but blowing a gale, hence the decision to walk with the wind behind us. We had morning tea at the campground and retraced our tracks up the valley. As we were now walking into the wind, we sought shelter at the old Orroral Homestead for lunch. We continued up the valley to the site of the Orroral tracking station, where we met a ranger who told us about the hazard reduction burn and also that the Nursery Swamp Track was now open. The wind had dropped and the day was very warm as we started back down the valley to our car at the Nursery Swamp car park.

About 100 metres from the homestead, in a patch of dry grass a long way from any watercourse, one of our party discovered a small, grey creature. On closer examination we were amazed to see that it was a small platypus. It was curled up in the grass and appeared very distressed – alive but barely moving. We decided that one of us would hurry back to the tracking station to get the ranger while the others kept watch over the platypus. On arrival at the tracking station, the emissary found out that the ranger had gone, the site was deserted and there was no mobile reception. So it was back to the group pronto to see what could be done.

Fortunately, one of our group had gardening gloves so gently picked up the platypus and placed it in a hat. The platypus did not resist and seemed happy to be put in the hat. What now to do with



*The small platypus in Orroral Valley.  
Photo by Lesley McCann.*

our new friend? The creek was quite a distance away and there was a large area of high grass and reeds between us and it. We also had no idea how deep the creek was or whether we could reach it. How the platypus had made it to the middle of the Orroral Valley far away from any water was a mystery.

We decided to take our new friend back to the car and release it in the nearest creek. With the platypus safely in the hat we walked the 3 km to the car. On reaching the carpark we put the hat on the ground and examined the occupant. We were not hopeful of survival but, surprise, surprise, the trip in the hat had had a miraculous effect. Our new friend was very much alive and moving about. Perhaps the inside of the hat was like a burrow offering protection.

The nearest creek was at the bridge near the Orroral camping ground, where we stopped and went down to the water.

The hat was lowered into the water, but the platypus was very reluctant to leave. However, when the water seeped in the creature had a new lease of life. It was a joy to see this native animal swim out of the hat and into the stream of water. Once in the water it uncurled and turned out to be larger than we had thought. After having a big drink, it headed down the stream and we hope to a new home.

It is a complete mystery how the platypus ended up lying in the grass in the hot sun or how long it had been there. During the day we had seen a couple of eagles overhead and can only assume one had picked it up then dropped it.

None of us had seen a platypus out of the water before and it was the last thing we had expected to find on our walk. We were the only people walking in that area and it was by sheer chance we came upon it. As we got back into the car after releasing it we were all smiling and agreed it was the highlight of the day. If only the grandchildren had been here to see the platypus was one of the comments on the way home.

I am so glad we were able to rescue one of our lovely native creatures and hope it is safely in its new home. On a previous visit to the Orroral Valley I had encountered a great big feral cat so our platypus may not have survived the night outside the safety of a stream.

**Robyn Kelly**

## Sunlight Lingers

We are the highest people in Australia today. Rae and me. Up and over Mount Stillwell and north into the Ramshead Range. Once more out on the rock and snow. Spring comes late at 2000 m, there are still huge snow drifts. As the drifts melt the alpine marsh marigold *Caltha introlaba* appears in the damp patches, in full flower. We stand and stare. Shelter in a grassy hollow, share our sardines, watch clouds billow over the Main Range.

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

**Gerry Jacobson**

# Easter 2015 on the Errinundra Plateau: tree ferns and giants

Our visit to the Errinundra Plateau, East Gippsland, during Easter this year was an eye opener. The temperate rainforest is stunning in its diversity and richness. Visit Errinundra to feast your eye on the greenery of tree ferns and old growth forest with giant eucalypts that are 600–800 years old. The plateau is part of the Errinundra National Park which we reached via Nimmitabel and Delegate on the Bonang Road to Orbost in Victoria.

We joined the Forests Forever Easter Ecology Camp that Environment East Gippsland Inc (EEG) organized with the Victorian National Parks Association. The camp was ‘among Peppermint and Manna Gums on the Brodribb River’ near the small settlement of Goongerah. Our speakers were botanist David Cameron, naturalist Bob McDonald, and longtime campaigner Jill Redwood, who lives on her organic farm with two faithful Clydesdales, her friendly German Shepherd plus goats, geese, chooks, and guinea fowl. VNPA’s Jenny and Euan conducted early bird walks and night spotting.

The campers were as diverse as the forest and were a mix of all ages and backgrounds.

My favourite outing was on Easter Sunday when Jill led us on a rough path through the old growth forest of Brown Mountain. It’s a forest of enormous Messmates (*Eucalyptus obliqua*), Shining Gums (*Eucalyptus denticulata*) and Mountain Grey Gums (*Eucalyptus cypellocarpa*). These old growth forests were the site of the 1989–1990 protest camp to halt logging of the National Estate forests. The camp was unsuccessful but in 2009 EEG launched a bold legal action in the Supreme Court which successfully sued the government logging agency VicForests which was planning to illegally log valuable habitat

for many rare protected species. Although EEG won the case, these magnificent forests remain unprotected.

As we walked I could smell the fresh eucalypt and bush fragrances. In the moist and gloomy understorey, a white bell-shaped flower (*Fieldia australis*?) twined around a tree looked like a luminescent lamp. Giant eucalypts stood as mighty sentinels, some with bark strips dangling down their sides, others with gnarled bark at their bases.

We saw Crimson Rosella but, unfortunately, no Glossy Black-Cockatoo. At our feet we spotted delicate pale blue mushrooms and shelf-like fungi on branches. Leeches were busy. Blood seeping beneath my watch showed that one had been feasting on me.

On Saturday we explored the plateau following forestry roads. We visited the rainforest boardwalk where David identified vegetation, explaining its characteristics and significance. Many plant species are endangered or heading for extinction increasingly threatened by anthropogenic climate change. Logging coupes have fragmented the rainforest, disturbing nature’s balance; we saw a spongy montane sphagnum bog which tea-tree is gradually overtaking because clear-fell logging in the upstream catchment is reducing flow.

On Saturday evening, another campaigner, Lizzie, with her team, served her homemade soup with bread rolls and then her dessert. The charge was \$9.00, all of which goes to fund the East Gippsland forest campaign.

Bob the naturalist spoke first about the overuse and impact of fire in Victoria and planned burning operations to clear ‘fuel’, alias leaf litter and ground habitat. Government fires destroy leaf litter and dry out the ground vegetation, habitat for the myriad fungi, insects, small

*Rainforest creeper.*  
Photo by Dave Kelly.



*Brodribb River at Goongerah. Photo by Dave Kelly.*

mammals and the lyrebirds that are nature’s own ‘fuel reducers’. They compost fallen leaves and bark by scratching, converting the litter to humus. Bob referred to the work of former Canberra CSIRO entomologists, Ted Edwards and Marianne Horak in this field.

He commented that it’s a white-fella interpretation that Aboriginal people burnt large tracts. They used fire principally for signaling or defence and on a small scale to procure food. If left alone, wet gullies and rainforest are buffers against wildfires. He mentioned the work of a forester who spoke to NPA ACT about his research into burning native vegetation in the Snowies, where many variables including vegetation type, soil and leaf moisture, fire frequency and intensity must be considered along with climate change.

On Saturday evening David Cameron read an interview by Dahr Jamail with environmental scientist Guy McPherson, provocatively titled ‘Are Humans Going Extinct?’ which raises the serious prospect of human extinction sooner than we think might occur, because of accelerating anthropogenic climate change, resource depletion, and human population growth. The coinciding total lunar eclipse provided an appropriate end to David’s presentation.

The squeak of sugar gliders punctuated the night sounds. Bats flitted past but no rare Powerful or Sooty Owl. Later two brushtails gazed goggle-eyed from a tree near the camp. Another significant threat to Errinundra’s native birds and mammals are feral cats of which Jill has the grim evidence.

Jill gave a presentation on Sunday night with sobering statistics: only 8 per cent of Victoria’s original forests remain

*(continued next page)*



## Easter 2015 on the Errinundra Plateau: tree ferns and giants *(continued from previous page)*

intact. Campaigners report VicForests is still illegally logging protected conservation areas such as rainforest and threatened species habitat. The industry also has different interpretations of what constitutes “old growth”. Giant eucalypts of 12 metres in girth and 600–800 years of age are considered old growth but are frequently felled, then burned.

Jill has spearheaded costly court cases against VicForests and won. She and her supporters are up against powerful interests. Harassment she’s received includes ‘... everything from my first Clydesdale being shot, to death threats at midnight, to destruction of property and attempts to run me off the road’.

The next campaigns will be to stop logging in the Kuark forest south of the Errinundra National Park and against biomass burning (using native forest as furnace fuel) which is being touted as renewable energy. ‘If that takes off it will make 50 years of woodchipping look like a minor upset on the landscape!’ says Jill.

For more information, see [www.eastgippsland.net.au](http://www.eastgippsland.net.au)

An NPA ACT trip to see the Errinundra Plateau will be organized sometime next year or you can join the Easter 2016 camp. Think of what you can do to help the campaign. Don’t let a state border stop you.

**Judy Kelly**

*Errinundra forest giant. Photo by Dave Kelly.*



## A dark night at Gundabooka National Park

Gundabooka is on the Darling River near Bourke. I’d travelled up the endlessly straight and sealed Kidman Way from Cobar, turned left for 20 kilometres on to a blood-red, crack-penetrating, dusty road and after another veer left had

settled into Dry Tank camping area. There was an elevated long-drop dunny, lots of fire scars and fireplaces and a sign about not straying off the walking track to Little Mountain.

The fire was on, the sun slicing away

and a cold leaden blanket settling on my shoulders. ‘Gonna be a beauty tonight, time to get some more wood.’

I circled off in ever-increasing diameters and finally found a decent termite-hollowed mulga log that might burn well into the night. The whole log was too heavy so I pulled off a flitch. There, lo and behold, were two ancient denizens of the outback – lightly clad Miss Jacky Jacky Lizard snuggled up to shiny, dark-plated Mr Shingleback. I stroked them both, but not a flinch or an eyelid roll. They were in torpor for the night.

‘Quick, get the shiny, new water- and dust-proof Fuji-Pix, set it on flash, go in close and grab a shot.’ Here it is (left).

I put the flitch back, carried another log to the fire and watched a million sparkling old suns come close enough to pluck out of the sky.

Next morning my scaly friends were gone.

**Klaus Hueneke**



# Forest fires big business in British Columbia

The guest speaker at NPA's June general meeting was the ACT Parks and Conservation Service's Brett McNamara. Brett's current position is Regional Manager, National Parks and Catchments. His bailiwick includes Namadgi, Tidbinbilla and the Murrumbidgee Corridor. In a very informative and entertaining presentation Brett told us of his adventures in Canada last August as part of the record 78-member Australian contingent sent to help fight the massive fires then burning in the forests of British Columbia.

Fire management is a very important part of Brett's job protecting our precious natural assets (see especially his excellent article on the trauma and aftermath of the 2003 fire in the March 2013 edition of the *NPA Bulletin*).

But on arrival in Canada Brett found a whole new world. While he said there are some things to be learnt from the Canadian experience, and some lessons that they could learn from our guys, the emphasis seemed to be on points of difference.

## First impressions

On arrival at Vancouver Brett was assigned to the 'China Nose' fire in the far north of British Columbia, hundreds of kilometres from Vancouver. China Nose is a notable geological feature on the end of a mountain range. At the time British Columbia was enduring an extended and widespread period of 'extreme' fire weather.

Flying north Brett was struck by the green colour of the whole landscape, and the liberal sprinkling of lakes. How could this be fire country? Whatever the appearance, the figures showed that there had been 1,320 individual fires, 337,467 hectares had been burnt, and \$US252,414,245 had been spent fighting those fires. Great care was taken in accounting for every buck spent in firefighting, and rounding it out to a quarter of a billion would be regarded as sloppy bookkeeping.

## Climate change a big factor

Brett found that the situation in Canada is very different to that confronting Australian firefighters. The fires in British Columbia occur in vast tracts of native conifers which are in fact commercially harvested. Fires are a much bigger problem now than they were not so long ago because global



*The China Nose fire. Photo supplied by Brett McNamara.*

warming has encouraged attack by the mountain pine beetle. This, in turn, results in an increasing proportion of dead and dying trees in the otherwise green forests. Combined with a dense layer of up to half a metre of forest litter ('duff') this makes the fires very hot and almost impossible to fully extinguish until winter comes, and with it snow. Brett observed that the fires did not tend to run or spot to quite the same extent as our eucalypt fires.

Because of the intensity of the fire, firefighting effort is largely concentrated on containment, with the object of minimising the loss of very valuable timber and protecting essential infrastructure.

## Fire Camp 116

Brett was taken to Fire Camp 116 at China Nose. This was a big show, with large transportable units set up for Showers, Toilets, Kitchen, Dining, First Aid, Finance, Planning, Security etc. All in all, a headquarters that seemed to be set up more for a war than a battle, and war it would prove to be. Each worker had their own little tent, much as we would use for pack walks. The tents were all of similar design and colour, and this led to some embarrassing encounters during the dark hours. So our blokes displayed the Aussie flag prominently (for their own protection?).

Great attention was paid to maintaining personal hygiene – hand-washing facilities were everywhere, and toilets, showers and basins were frequently cleaned. Separate facilities of course were available for the ladies.

## Safety measures

The firefighting force was comprised entirely of professional workers, with no volunteers. Everyone was thoroughly instructed on safety procedures as well

as their particular assignments. The former included advice on what to do when confronted by an angry (or hungry?) bear – use your 'bear banger' which, when thrown on the ground, makes a noise that will hopefully deter said bear (further advice was not to throw it behind the bear).

Workers were also equipped with whistles for use as alarms or to summon help. These were fastened on to shirt collars, and people were made to practise using them hands-free in case they were pinned under a tree or in some similar predicament. Tree safety was taken very seriously. Everyone's work was closely supervised, with high standards demanded in all situations.

## Technology and tactics

Because of the nature of the forests and the fires therein, and the focus on containment, the gear used is quite different to that typically used in Oz. The three essential elements are described by the locals as 'tin, iron and boots', where 'tin' represents helicopters (there were sixteen working on the China Nose fire), 'iron' represents heavy machinery (including bulldozers, but also many specialist machines used in harvesting timber), and 'boots' represents Brett and over a hundred others from various places.

There were very few if any firefighting trucks at the firefront, as we would expect to see here. When a containment line was made, all trees removed were harvested, with nil waste. All of the 'duff' and litter to a certain width was exhaustively removed by hand, the line 'plumbed' with pumps, canvas hose and holding dams. At China Nose there were 36 kilometres of such hose installed. When finished with, the hose is 'sent south' for cleaning, ready for re-use at the next fire.

## The bottom line

One of Brett's main impressions was the impact that global warming is having on the North American forests, and the awareness and concern being expressed by the people there as they confront the issue. The Australian firefighters in Canada last year were fully funded by the Government of British Columbia, with no cost to the Australian taxpayer.

**Max Lawrence**



# News on the Glenburn/Burbong Historic Precinct



## Glenburn/Burbong now an NPA project

The Glenburn/Burbong Historic Precinct is now a project of the National Parks Association of the ACT. This will ensure the long-term provision of assistance to the ACT Parks and Conservation Service to help it protect and conserve the important early European relics in the precinct.

As a large, financially strong, incorporated body respected by government and the general community, we are well placed to build on the strong partnership that The Friends of Glenburn and the Parks Service have forged over the past 7 years in the precinct.

As a result of the new administrative arrangements, NPA submitted a replacement application to that lodged by The Friends for a heritage grant to go towards a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for the precinct. The CMP will provide a blueprint for future protection and conservation work in the precinct. See the June *NPA Bulletin* for more information.

## Heritage status of the precinct

My submission in support of the provisional registration by the ACT Heritage Council was followed up with comments on 17 May. Rhonda Boxall and the National Trust of Australia (ACT) also made submissions to the council in support of the provisional registration. We expect the final decision on registration before 9 January 2016.

## Glenburn/Burbong Heritage Trail

In late June, Max Lawrence and I discussed with members of the Parks Service the development of the Glenburn/Burbong Heritage Trail. While the trail will be for the use of both walkers and cyclists, cyclists will be restricted to those parts of the trail that use made roads such as Charcoal Kiln Road, Atkinsons Road, Coppermine Road and River Road. This is to prevent damage to sections of the trail that run through paddocks.

When the trail is completed, it will connect most of the historic sites in the precinct. It will be well signposted, starting from a large sign at the intersection of Charcoal Kiln Road and the Kings Highway. In addition, a brochure will be produced and there will be information about the trail on the Parks Service's website. I am sure that



The new sign erected at Atkinson Trig. Photo by Ellyse Sheridan.

the trail will generate a lot of interest in and visits to this once vibrant small rural community that is no more.

It is expected that, in time, the parts of the trail with cycle access will be connected to other cycle routes in the Kowen Forest, including those to sites such as Blue Tiles on the Molonglo River downstream from Coppins Homestead ruins and the site of the Kowen Homestead some 3 kilometres to the west of Glenburn Homestead.

## More work ahead

I would like to encourage more NPA members to join work parties in the precinct. We generally meet on the first Tuesday in February, March, August and November. While most of the work that volunteers are called on to undertake is not strenuous, it is nonetheless rewarding to see its palpable benefits to the protection and conservation of the historic sites.

Thank you to those who have made tax-deductible donations to NPA for work at Glenburn/Burbong. We would, of course, welcome more to assist with the cost of signage at the intersection of the Kings Highway and Charcoal Kiln Road and for the heritage trail.

Finally, I too 'look forward to continuing this effective partnership [between The Friends and the ACT Parks and Conservation Service] through the National Parks Association of the ACT', as Minister Rattenbury wrote in a letter on 1 July.

## Drive-walks through the precinct

On Sunday 11 October, a drive-walk will be held as part of the NPA Outings Program. It will be a good opportunity to see the major developments and to hear about future plans. All welcome. See the Outings Program for details.

On Wednesday 21 October, I will be conducting a similar outing for U3A. One in April this year attracted more than 30 members. I am hoping for another good turnout.

Col McAlister

Contact: 6288 4171 or  
cvmac@grapevine.com.au

## Brief NPAC news

- The Annual General Meeting of the National Parks Australia Council will be held in Hobart, Tasmania from 30 October - 1 November 2015.
- A part-time policy officer has been employed, working out of the Conservation Council ACT office.
- NPAC is preparing a submission to the senate committee investigating changes to the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act designed to weaken the legislation.

# Bushwalks

## Curtin to Arboretum

**Date:** Sunday 14 June 2015.

**Participants:** Brian Slee (Leader), Peter Anderson-Smith, John Brickhill, Brian Christensen, Greg Lawrence, Michaela Popham, Annette Smith, Mike Smith, Janet Thompson, Tim Walsh.

**Weather:** Blue sky with wispy cloud; mild temperatures in still air.

Oh, for a life long enough to see the National Arboretum reach maturity. Internet photos give an idea of the exotic spiny-trunked Silk Floss trees (*Ceiba speciosa*) and the extraordinary NZ Lancewoods (*Pseudopanax ferox*). Their youngsters are in the Arboretum but it is necessary to leave the Village Centre's coffee and views and walk to the rarely visited south and west sides of Dairy Farmers Hill for a close up.

Having gathered outside Coles in Curtin at 9.30 am, we crossed the suburb in parkland to its higher western edge. Turning north, we entered a neglected cork oak forest where Irish strawberries have made a home. Rosellas enjoy the bright red fruit.

From the oaks we dashed across Cotter Road into horse country. Vast infrastructure services a staggering range of training, parading and hurdling facilities, connected by trails to more paddocks in Curtin. The Bicentennial Trail links them to the High Country –

enough said. We kept on a bridle trail almost to Yarralumla Woolshed where we had morning tea on the jumps amid lofty pines and yellow-berried Melias.

At 11 am we followed the horses north, crossing the Molonglo on a concrete ford, and climbed through pine forests to the National Zoo. Rhinos and an emu could be seen as we rounded the boundary to a grubby Parkway underpass and into the Arboretum. Unfortunately, the first species encountered was *Pinus radiata binata*, planted in 2010. Surely there are already enough of its invasive cousins nearby.

Anyhow, we diverted to the aforesaid Lancewoods before the lure of the natives drew us through eucalypts to the Bottle Trees (*Brachychiton rupestris*). Then uphill, past the Chilean relatives of Tasmania's Nothofagus, to the shade of lot 76. After passing Small-leaved Gums (*Eucalyptus parvula*), lunch at 12.30 was on the next hill west, among the lovely Stone Pines (*Pinus pinea* – pine nut producers, just 3 metres high).

In the afternoon we climbed past the alluring Weeping Snowgums (*Eucalyptus*



*The National Arboretum. Photo by Max Lawrence.*

*lacrimans*) to the best view of Canberra, Dairy Farmers Hill. A new path then led us to bladder relief and a long break at the coffee palace. After descending the amphitheatre to the distinguished visitor plantings, we passed back under the Parkway and climbed Roman Cypress Hill, an impressive part of the rehabilitated Lindsay Pryor Arboretum. We dodged traffic on Lady Denman before crossing Scrivener Dam, headed past the woolshed on its eastern side and into Curtin, arriving 3.45 pm.

A makeshift 12 km winter walk turned into an informative outing. Worth repeating for the unveiling of a memorial to Jon Stanhope, who defied the critics.

**Brian Slee**

## Mount Morgan

**Date:** Sunday 17 May 2015

**Participants:** Brian Slee (Leader), Peter Anderson-Smith

**Weather:** Cool; exceptionally clear; slight breeze on high.

Horses are gone from Mount Morgan: we found no hoof prints on Lone Pine Fire Trail or any leading from there to the summit. Trail riders no longer climb it. Only a few desiccated dung heaps near Bung Harris Creek provide evidence that they ever did. And the logbook in a canister atop the mountain had only one entry for 2015, in January, suggesting that two-legged mammals have become rare visitors.

Which means that the track, once obvious, is no longer to be taken for granted, particularly where it runs through grass at the upper levels. A couple of times we briefly strayed when descending and on another occasion were reaching for the GPS when the way suddenly became clear.

Having departed Kambah at 7.30 am, we followed Boboyan Road south (excellent surface) and a few kilometres into NSW turned right onto Yaouk Road. Heavily frosted trees indicated overnight temperatures had been about  $-10^{\circ}$ . Kennedy Road, which is followed north off Yaouk Road for 8 km, was muddy in patches. The number of gate openings has been reduced to four.

We parked next to the fire trail, outside *Snowgums*, and set off at 9.30 am. It must have been cold, considering the size of the frost heaves, but the steep climbs kept us busy. As usual, the 'camp ground' at Bung Harris Creek was a sunny place to stop for elevenses. *Grevilleas* in flower.

It is a 40-minute climb from there to the first summit and on the second summit east of there we had lunch. Snow from the previous week could be seen in crevices but there were significant patches still on Jagungal and long

blankets of snow on mountains further south of there. The clarity of the air added to the spectacular views.

After visiting the highest peak, where the stone trig stood until destroyed in 1996, we turned for home. We were back at the car soon after 3 pm, just in time to talk to members of the young family who have become owners of *Snowgums*. They left the gates open for us as we drove out onto sunny Yaouk plain. We were back at Kambah at 5.15 pm.

Note: Next to Kennedy Road, near *Old Yaouk*, a substantial roadside shrine, possibly a memorial, was erected about ten years ago. It always was an oddity. Too odd for someone, as it has been demolished, the base surrounded by a pile of broken bricks and pieces.

**Brian Slee**

## The Bog

**Date:** Wednesday 27 May 2015

**Leader:** Philip Gatenby

**Weather:** Better than expected – mostly sunny, light wind.

The Bog is a frost hollow on the eastern side of the Booth Range, about 2 km south of the summit of Booths Hill. You won't find its name on any regular topographic maps which mark the area as a wet swamp, drained to some extent by a nameless tributary of Naas River. It's well off the beaten track – off any track for that matter. The Bog was the destination for a recent Wednesday walk (these are weekly walks led on a rotating basis by NPA and the Brindabella and Canberra Bushwalking clubs).

Twelve of us set out from the Hospital Hill Lookout on the Boboyan Road. The first part of the walk was a descent, steep in parts, to Dry Creek. In contrast to its name there was a good flow of water over the cascade where the party crossed. Ahead the route was a spur onto the Booth Range, its lower flanks thick with *Bursaria* resulting in prickly walking for a while. After we gained the spur the scrub thinned, and walking, though steeper, got easier. As we climbed, Namadgi's major peaks were revealed in a sun-tipped panorama to the west. Near the ridge-top a number of small scree slopes had to be crossed. Dropping off the ridge to the north-east we soon joined and then followed one of the creeks that seeps rather than flows into The Bog. We arrived at our destination around midday, in time for a leisurely lunch.

There was once a hut with a vegie patch on The Bog. The hut was reportedly built in the late 1920s by Ted and Tom Oldfield, with timber poles, metal walls and an iron-clad gable roof. My first trip to The Bog was in May 1998 when the hut was partly upright and the gable roof was visible. Inside were a few bags of possibly salt, and an old rake. On subsequent visits a year later and in 2007 gradually less of the hut was evident. Little survived the 2003 bushfire. All that remains today are pieces of iron and wood inexorably disappearing beneath the encroaching grass. Nearby, old wooden posts and a section of wire fence outline what appears to have been a yard.

Rather than retrace the morning's route, we left The Bog by way of the main inflowing stream, which rises gradually to the south. As a result we crossed both the Booth Range and Dry Creek, well south of the morning's crossing. Mostly we walked through relatively open forest (for Namadgi at least). The cars at the lookout were reached 6 hours after leaving.

**Philip Gatenby**

### Reference

*Namadgi Sites* by Matthew Higgins, Kosciusko Huts Association, Canberra, ACT, 1994.



*Stages in the disintegration of the hut at The Bog.*

*Photos by Philip Gatenby.*

# PARKWATCH

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

## **Ginninderra Falls Conservation Park**

In the last few years the Ginninderra Falls Association has developed a proposal to create an outstanding regional park in NSW just north of the ACT border. The proposal covers the land around the confluence of Ginninderra Creek and the Murrumbidgee River which includes the scenic and spectacular Ginninderra Falls. The association aims to a) restore public access to the Ginninderra Creek and Murrumbidgee River corridor and Ginninderra Falls, and b) create a public park for recreational, educational and ecological purposes.

The catchment was first sighted by Charles Throsby in 1820 on a reconnaissance expedition from the Lake George area. In 1824 Allan Cunningham reported valuable sheep pastures and water sources. Ever since those early days the land in that region of NSW, now on the border with ACT, has been in private ownership. In December 2013 a report by the NSW Government indicated that the area “contains significant scenic as well as natural and heritage values” and that the area “could see in excess of 50,000 visitors per year”.

For several years the Riverview Group Development Company has been preparing plans for the township now called Parkwood that involves housing construction in the ACT bordering the Murrumbidgee River corridor and on the adjacent privately owned land in NSW south of Ginninderra Creek and its spectacular gorge. The proposal envisages about 11,500 dwellings for about 30,000 people over a 10–15 year period on both ACT and NSW land. Approaches by the Ginninderra Falls Association in recent years to both the NSW and ACT Governments to establish a cross-border national park have been rejected, mainly on cost grounds. Hence the push now by the Association to ensure a viable conservation zone along the waterways, before the land is rezoned for urban development. The Association maintains that the proposed urban footprint for the Parkwood township in NSW does not allow the establishment of an adequate and sustainable conservation park along the Murrumbidgee River and Ginninderra Creek corridors within NSW. It must be

modified to include corridors of at least 300 metres along all waterways.

The Ginninderra Falls Association has now joined with the Conservation Council of the ACT and the Ginninderra Creek Catchment Group to promote the establishment of a conservation corridor along the Ginninderra Creek and the Murrumbidgee River in NSW. The group will examine the issue of endangered species within the gorges along these waterways. The association now urges all community associations and the general public to make representations to the ACT and NSW Government authorities and the Yass Valley Council to ensure that, during the land rezoning process due to take place in 2015, all river and creek parkland and conservation corridors extend at least 300 m from the waterways and that urban development does not intrude into areas with significant natural heritage and ecological values.

*Nature NSW winter 2015*

## **Aerial culling of feral horses stopped**

The NSW Government has prematurely ruled out aerial culling, the most effective feral horse control measure, six months before the draft Wild Horse Management Plan for Kosciusko National Park was due to be released for public comment. Populations of feral horses in the area have exploded over the last decade, resulting in severe damage to local vegetation and stream banks due to overgrazing, trampling of vegetation and soil erosion.

NPA (NSW) strongly disagrees with the government’s decision to stop aerial culling – a highly effective and humane method of control. Over the next year we will continue to campaign for more strategic management of horse populations headed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

*Nature NSW winter 2015*

## **Controversial draft management plan released for Tasmanian World Heritage Area**

A controversial new draft management plan for the spectacular Tasmanian World Heritage Area proposed a number of alarming changes, including opening up the remote wilderness to private development, logging and mining. The 2014 Draft Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan was released for public comment in January 2015, after minimal public consultation. Submissions are currently under review

by the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service, who will then compile a report for the planning commission. NPA is extremely concerned about the potentially devastating impacts of the new plan and will continue to campaign for stronger protection of Tasmania’s unique wilderness areas. Visit the Tasmanian National Parks Association’s website, [www.tpna.asn.au](http://www.tpna.asn.au) for more information.

*Nature NSW winter 2015*

## **Call for immediate ban of logging of koala habitat in state forests**

After an enquiry in February revealed serious deficiencies in the Environment Protection Authority’s regulation of forestry operations in NSW, NPA joined the Nature Conservation Council of NSW and the North East Forest Alliance in calling for an immediate halt to logging of state forest containing koala habitat. NSW Forestry Corporation harvest plans indicate that 83 compartments in the 170,000ha Great Koala National Park proposal area alone have been listed for logging before the end of 2015. We are appealing to the state’s political parties to acknowledge the urgency of this issue and to place an immediate moratorium on logging in koala habitat.

*Nature NSW winter 2015*

## **Nature Conservation Review**

When our first nature conservation review was published 42 years ago, in 1972, just 1.2 per cent of Victoria’s land area was protected in national parks. There were no marine parks, the annual management budget for protected areas was just \$141,000, and little was known about the state’s biodiversity. We know a great deal more now, and about 17 per cent of Victoria’s land area and 5 per cent of our state waters are now protected in the national park estate.

However, there is no doubt that, while Victoria has made progress since the first nature conservation review in 1971, our current system of environmental stewardship is failing and we still have a huge amount of work to do. Pressures on nature have also grown. On current trajectories they condemn our seas, lands and waters to growing biological poverty and ecological dysfunction.

The objectives of the 2014 Nature Conservation Review are:

*(continued next page)*

## **PARKWATCH** (continued)

- To review new information, knowledge and approaches to nature conservation as applied to Victoria.
- To identify priority areas for nature conservation and national parks.
- To review threatening processes and identify reforms to improve nature conservation in Victoria.

The full report, as well as individual chapters and appendices, can be downloaded from our website.

www.vnpa.org.au accessed 21/7/2015

### **Fishing for an answer to seabird death**

Humane Society International (HSI) exposed that Australia's seabirds were being caught and drowned by trawl fisheries back in 2011. Since then we have gained respect for our work in preventing deaths from longline fishing, particularly those of the threatened albatross species. We had requested the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) adopt a consistent Commonwealth level approach across all fisheries whilst still allowing for vessel variables to be accounted for. However, due to the variety of vessels in the trawl sector, AFMA applied their Seabird Management Plans which were specific to each boat, recommending mitigation measures to reduce seabird bycatch. Subsequently, AFMA reviewed the effectiveness of seabird mitigation devices in 2014, looking at the measure being deployed and when seabird interactions are most likely to occur.

HSI has continually called for the discharge of offal fishing waste to be banned. The discharge attracts seabirds to the boats where they can tangle with the warp wires which hold the fishing net in the water with fatal results. HSI believes the mandatory retention of offal while fishing gear is in the water will prevent seabird deaths. The 2014 report reinforced this view, noting it to be one of the more effective measures against seabird interactions. Sadly despite the report's findings, AFMA are reluctant to enforce offal retention, opting instead for a range of other 'solutions' and the development of a strategy to address seabird interactions. These delays are disappointing but HSI will continue pressing for trawling's 'zero impact' on seabirds.

*Humane Society International Newsletter, Volume 21, Issue 1, March 2015.*

### **Buffel grass**

Buffel grass (*Cenchrus ciliaris*) is a grass native to semi-arid areas of Africa, the Middle East and southern Asia and is now also naturalised in many parts of Australia. Buffel grass appears to have been first introduced into Australia inadvertently in the 1870s via seeds trapped in saddles and other imported equipment used with animals. However, it really made its presence felt from 1910 when it was first deliberately planted as a pasture grass. It quickly found favour with graziers in many lower rainfall areas. The first sowing in Queensland was at Cloncurry in 1926. It continues to be planted in some areas and is now found in all mainland states and territories with the exception of Victoria. In Central Australia, it has been planted for soil stabilisation and dust control.

Buffel grass can remain dormant during long drought periods then begin to grow vigorously within a short time after about 25mm rain. It also has a deep root system and can access underground moisture more readily than most native grasses. The grass is a prolific producer of burr-like seeds which can be spread by wind, flowing water and animals into areas well beyond where the grass was originally sown. Unfortunately, these characteristics also make buffel grass a serious environmental weed. There is no one optimum method for controlling buffel grass. For small to modest areas, herbicide treatment is the single most effective method, but it can only be done when the plant is actively growing. One application of herbicide is rarely fully effective and follow-up is needed.

Some hold the view that slashing during dry periods is desirable so that new growth is better exposed to herbicide application. However, this may be difficult to do where there is a good scattering of native shrubs. Butler and Fairfax (2003) considered fire to be the worst agent in assisting buffel grass spread and advocated intense grazing to prevent seed formation and reduce fuel loads prior to fire danger periods. However, Eyre et al (2009) found that increased grazing ultimately led to increased buffel grass cover, probably because of the greater soil disturbance.

Overall, the picture is one of increased awareness of the threat that buffel grass poses to the areas of conservation value and the environment generally. Hopefully this will lead to increased containment and removal efforts, and ultimately to the political will to end its commercial use.

*Protected NPA QLD Issue 2, May 2015*

### **Protecting country**

For Jeffrey Lee, Senior Traditional Owner and member of the Djok clan, receiving the 2013 Peter Rawlinson Award provided a welcome recognition of his success in protecting his country from uranium mining. The Peter Rawlinson Award is awarded by Australian Conservation Foundation for outstanding voluntary contribution to protecting the environment, and honours the life and work of biologist and conservationist Dr Peter Rawlinson who was a champion of grass roots environmental campaigning and challenged government policy of a number of issues such as the removal of lead from petrol and the safe-guarding of forest habitat.

Jeffrey Lee won the 2013 Award for his many years campaigning to remove the threat of uranium mining from his lands at Koongarra, a region surrounded by – but not listed in – the World-Heritage-listed Kakadu National Park. It was a journey that took him to Paris in 2001 to meet with UNESCO's World Heritage Committee, where he convinced UNESCO to include Koongarra in the World Heritage Estate. In 2013 the area was formally included into Kakadu and permanently protected from uranium mining.

For decades, Jeffrey faced sustained pressure to allow uranium mining on his land and for decades he resisted – refusing millions of dollars in promised mining payments. He protected and shared his land and generously allowed it to be included in Kakadu NP. Speaking at the closing plenary session of the International Union for Conservation (IUNC) World Parks Congress in Sydney last November, Jeffrey said

'I have said no to uranium mining at Koongarra because I believe that the land and my cultural beliefs are more important than mining and money. Money comes and goes, but the land is always here, it always stays if we look after it and it will look after us.'

*Habitat Volume 43 No 2 July 2015*

**Compiled by Hazel Rath**

# NPA notices

National Parks Association Calendar				
	September	October	November	December
Public holidays	Mon 28	Mon 5	—	Fri 25, Sat 26, Mon 28
General meetings	Thurs 17	Thurs 15	Thurs 19	—
Committee meetings	Tues 1	Tues 6	Tues 3	Tues 1
NPA ACT Christmas party <sup>1</sup>				Sun 13
NPA Art Week, Gudgenby Cottage <sup>4</sup>		Sat 3–Sun 11		
Gudgenby Bush Regeneration <sup>2</sup>	Sat 12	Sat 10	Sat 7	Sat 12*
Glenburn work party <sup>3</sup>			Tues 3	

Further details: 1. NPA Christmas party, see notice below.  
 2. GBRG. Meet at Namadgi Visitor Centre 9:15 am, or Yankee Hat car park 10:00 am.  
 \* GBRG Christmas party, notice on page 11.  
 3. Friends of Glenburn meet at Canberra Railway Station, Kingston at 9:00 am, or at the locked gate off the Kings Highway at 9:20 am.  
 4. NPA Art Week, see notice page 11.

## New members of the association

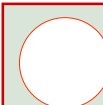


The NPA ACT welcomes the following new members:

Evan Williamson,  
 Julie May,  
 Terrylea and Mark Reynolds,  
 Sam and Ian Nerrie

We also have 18 Fenner School students who have taken up our offer of complimentary membership.

We look forward to seeing everyone at NPA activities.



## Red spot



Subscriptions for 2015–16 are now overdue. If there is a red spot on your *Bulletin* address sheet and in your *Bulletin* or you have received a reminder notice and not yet paid, the association's records show your current subscription has not been received.

Please take the time to make amendments to the enclosed renewal form if the information NPA holds confidentially in its database needs correcting. Please send the whole form back with your payment details. Thank you!



## NPA Christmas party Sunday 13 December

from 11:30am

### Orroral Tracking Station picnic area

This year's NPA Christmas Party will be at the Orroral Tracking Station picnic area in Namadgi National Park.

Meet in the car park at the end of the Orroral Valley road.

All the usual features; bring your picnic lunch and Christmas cheer – nibbles, Christmas cake and some drinks will be provided.

Check *Burning Issues* for details.

Contact: NPA committee members.



## About the NPA Bulletin

This *NPA Bulletin* was prepared by:  
 Editors, Kevin McCue and Sonja Lenz  
 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 December 2015 issue: 31 October 2015.**

## Cover photographs

### Front cover

**Main photo.** Ramshead sunrise, looking south to The Pilot and Cobberas.  
 Photo by Rupert Barnett.

**Insets. Left.** Forest creeper, Errinundra Plateau (article page 14).  
 Photo by Dave Kelly.

**Centre.** NPA President Rod Griffiths with NPA-sponsored Honours student April Suen (see page 7).  
 Photo by Sabine Friedrich.

**Right.** *Philotheca* flowering at Nadgigomar Nature Reserve (article page 10).  
 Photo by Rupert Barnett.

### Back cover

**Top.** Ramshead dawn, Mount Kosciuszko. Photo by Rupert Barnett.

**Bottom.** Sunrise over the Main Range. Photo by Rupert Barnett.

# General Meetings

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



## Thursday 17 September

*Bush Heritage: national and regional programs*

**Peter Saunders**

Healthy Landscapes Manager, South East NSW

After a brief historical overview, Peter will review Bush Heritage and its nearly 1 million hectares of land over seven geographical regions across Australia. With the 10 Year Conservation Science Plan recently launched from Scottsdale, Peter will detail conservation strategies and actions and advance solutions to key conservation problems. Some detail will be given on how to support and be involved with Bush Heritage.

## Thursday 15 October

*Possums, Parks and Politics*

**Dr David Lindenmayer**

Professor of Ecology and Conservation Biology, ANU

Leadbeater's Possum, one of Victoria's faunal emblems, once thought to be extinct, may really be facing extinction right now. Dr Lindenmayer will outline the history of the campaign to save this rare creature and its habitat through the efforts to establish Victoria's Great Forest National Park. For some background Google leadbeaters.org.au

## Thursday 19 November

*Investigating the effect of genetic diversity on population dynamics in bettongs in the ACT*

**April Suen**

NPA ACT Honours Scholarship recipient

April's research will enable her to analyse and identify population genetic trends such as genetic diversity and mating structure within the ACT. The results will inform future planning of reintroductions of small marsupials.

## National Parks Association of the ACT Incorporated

Inaugurated 1960

### Aims and objectives of the Association

- Promotion of national parks and of measures for the protection of fauna and flora, scenery, natural features and cultural heritage in the Australian Capital Territory and elsewhere, and the reservation of specific areas.
- Interest in the provision of appropriate outdoor recreation areas.
- Stimulation of interest in, and appreciation and enjoyment of, such natural phenomena and cultural heritage by organised field outings, meetings or any other means.
- Cooperation with organisations and persons having similar interests and objectives.
- Promotion of, and education for, conservation, and the planning of landuse to achieve conservation.

### Office-bearers

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