



NPA *Bulletin*

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National Parks Association of the Australian Capital Territory Inc.



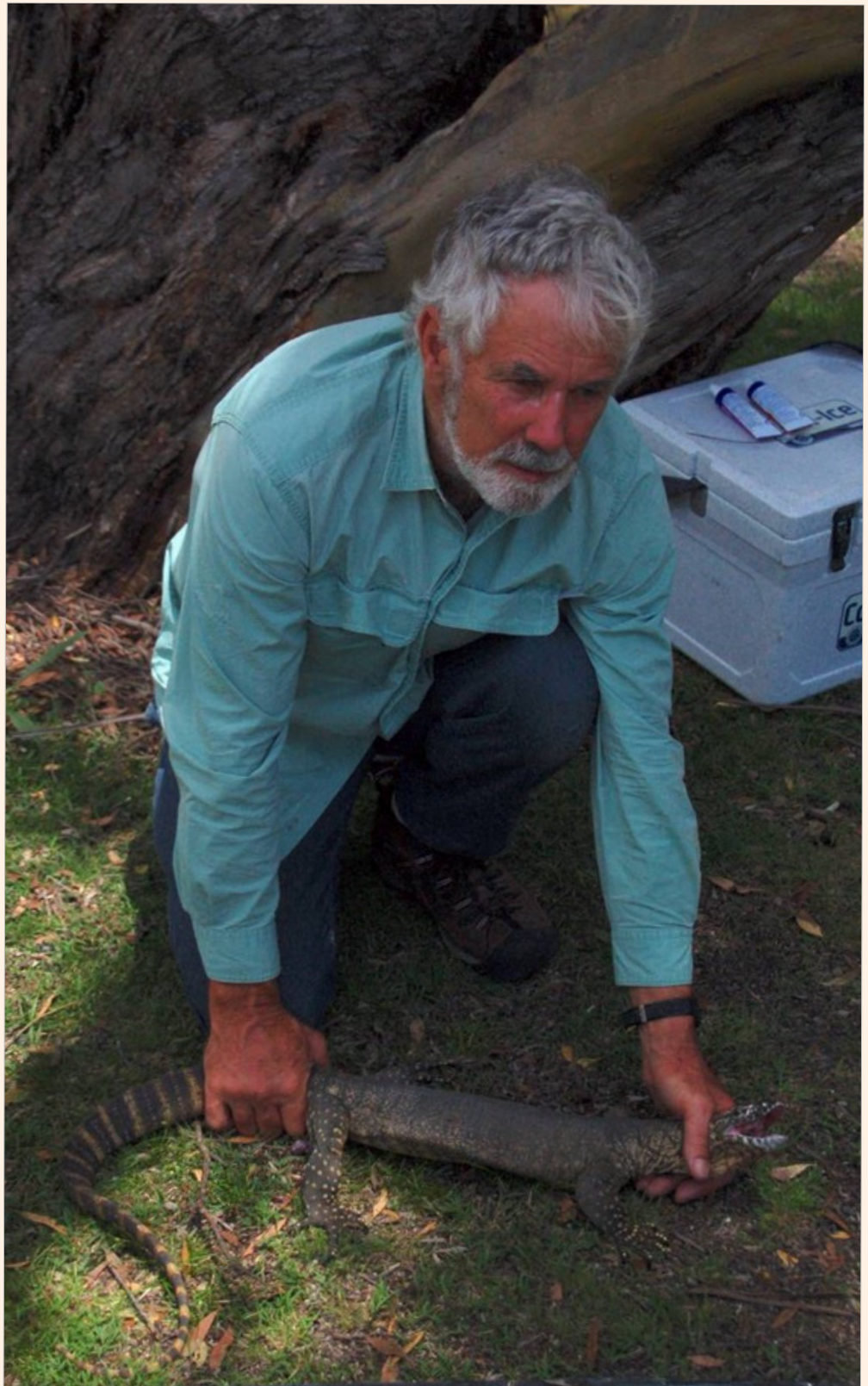
NPA Christmas party



British Columbia wilderness



Macquarie Island adventure



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

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Thanks from the Editor

Editing the *Bulletin* is a pleasure when so many of you are willing to provide copy. Many thanks to the regulars, like Hazel Rath, Steven Forst and his team, Brian Slee and Gerry Jacobson.

It is always refreshing to have articles on conservation, bushwalking and travel from occasional contributors – please keep them coming.

Committee members provide a large percentage of the material reporting what they have been doing on behalf of you, the members. I would especially like to

congratulate the Webmaster and Sabine Friedrich for the flash new website (page 3).

Should anyone be tempted to help, please talk to a committee member rather than wait for a tap on the shoulder. We could do with another *Bulletin* editor, for example, to spread the load, and all of the working groups and subcommittees would welcome you with open arms.

We are all indebted to Christine Goonrey whose contributions over many years culminated in last year's bushfire

symposium, a draft NPA policy document (page 4) and an ongoing project that will rewrite the management of bushfires in the ACT – the end of McArthurism.

Once again thanks to the team of Ed Highley, Sonja Lenz and Adrienne Nicholson who put this edition together.

Kevin McCue

NPA's 60th anniversary notice

Dear members

You might remember the celebrations we had in 2010 for NPA's 50th anniversary. In March 2020 NPA ACT reaches another milestone – the association turns 60!

Now is when we start planning for this great occasion – what suggestions do you all have for worthy and enjoyable ways of celebrating this anniversary? We could spread our celebrations over the whole year with some special bushwalks, a new publication, a big party or much more ...

Your management committee is asking for your input – please let us know your thoughts. What can we all do together?

Looking forward to your suggestions

Sonja Lenz, Secretary



News from the committee

President's report

Welcome to the first issue of the 2018 *Bulletin*. While many of you enjoyed the summer holidays, your committee has been hard at work. (Well to be honest many of us have had some significant holiday time as well.) Since the last issue, we have enjoyed a well-attended Christmas party in fine weather at Gudgenby Cottage. This followed on from another successful though delayed art week at the cottage. Plans are underway for the next art week in May (see page 15).

Books

The Christmas party featured an opportunity to buy the newly revised and updated NPA *Field Guide to the Native Trees of the ACT* – a stunning addition to our catalogue of titles. The official launch will occur shortly. And speaking of stunning, the butterfly field guide has sold so well that it is already being reprinted with a few corrections and additions. Look for it in March or April.

We sold books and distributed information in celebration of World Wetlands Day at Jerrabomberra Wetlands on 3 February (see photo on page 8). We also plan to have a bookstall at the ACT Connect and Participate Expo at the end of March. The booksellers were disappointed when the Canberra Environment Centre's EcoElves Market in early December was cancelled at the last minute but glad they weren't out in the downpour.

Research

The first research project funded by our recent generous bequest is well under way. Two Rosenberg's Monitors have been fitted with tracking devices and have amazed and delighted the volunteers and scientists working on the project (see article on pages 6 and 7). An enlarged study seems likely to follow.

Website

Be sure to check out the newly redesigned and updated NPA ACT website. This much needed makeover makes it easier to find us with online searches and is easy to navigate once you get to the website. Thank you, Sabine and Chris!

Honour

What a pleasant surprise to find one of our own, Di Thompson OAM, on the Australia Day honours list. And a double treat to find that volunteer work on behalf of conservation and the environment was being rewarded. Congratulations and well done Di!

Feral horses

Feral horses in national parks is a more sobering topic. The Victorian Government has drafted a proposal for reducing feral horses in their Alpine National Park and asked for comments. The problem with their plan, as with the 2016 NSW plan for Kosciuszko National Park, is that they are proposing only to trap and rehome horses. Victoria has, however, left the door open for other



means of reduction if (when) this plan does not work. NPA ACT submitted a comprehensive response to the proposal drafted by the Environment Subcommittee (see the NPA ACT website). Thanks to all the individual members who wrote submissions and/or filled in the online survey. The Victorian National Parks Association appreciates our support on this most vexing issue.

Taxing threat

And another issue for your attention. There are currently discussions among politicians on legislation which would mean any organisation involved in lobbying could lose its charitable donation status. If you disagree with this, tell the Prime Minister. The environment needs as strong a voice as possible!

Celebrating 60

Finally, discussions are underway about the 60th anniversary of NPA ACT in 2020 and how to celebrate this milestone. If you have ideas and/or would like to help, please contact a committee member.

Esther Gallant

NPA's new website

You may have already noticed that our NPA website has been completely redesigned. The previous website was about 15 years old and, because the local IT firm that designed it went bust years ago, there could be no updates of the underlying software, making our website vulnerable to hacking. Also, the ancient editor program wasn't working properly and the website was far from mobile-friendly (which lowers our ranking on search engines like Google).

NPA member Sabine Friedrich has designed us a new website using the open-source (free) content management system called Joomla, which is built and supported by a worldwide team of IT volunteers and is now mobile-friendly. For the IT gurus, it is Apache/PHP/MySQL based. There are over two

million Joomla websites in the world, including popular websites such as eBay, General Electric, IKEA, Pizza Hut, Kelloggs, Linux, United Nations (Western Europe), Energy Asia and Holiday Inn. All the existing content on our old website has been ported across to the new one and additional content will be added as it comes to hand.

Our website will continue to be hosted (stored) by BluePackets Pty Ltd in Fyshwick (we are happy to be supporting a local firm) and they provide us fast response times, download speeds and support. BluePackets is where the website resides because they have high bandwidth connections to the internet. When anyone changes something on our website they are changing data held at BluePackets which also runs daily

backups and scans for hackers. Sabine also runs occasional backups to our home data storage units.

Please pass any comments to me (as webmaster), using the website contact form.

Chris Emery

NPA draft Fire Management Policy 2018

Following the successful NPA ACT July 2017 Symposium, *Bushfire Management – Balancing the Risks*, the following draft policy is proposed to guide NPA ACT's approach to fire management in the ACT.

Key statements:

1. Fire management in the ACT must have as one of its key priorities the protection of environmental values across the territory.
2. Responsibility for fire prevention, mitigation and management must be shared across relevant agencies and the general public, with a clear focus on scientific research, practical experience of land managers and clear communication across all sectors.

Sound fire management requires commitment to the following strategies:

- Designing fire management regimes suited to different ecosystems, species, compositions and age classes.
- Building resilience to climate change into long-term bushfire planning processes including addressing potential threats to local species.
- Robust annual monitoring and reporting on all fire management strategies and practices.
- Support for a cultural burns framework and practice.
- Increased research to provide a local

scientific base to inform operational bushfire management

- Developing greater understanding in the community of the competing values and responses to fire management and wildfires.
- Recognition that the urban/bush interface is a special zone where residents may experience a higher risk. This requires an appropriate zoning classification for new buildings and extra precautions in established building, e.g. rooftop sprinklers; fire resistant window shutters on exposed sides; replacing tile with metal roofs and wooden fences with colourbond fences and keeping backyards free of combustible material.
- Building community preparedness and resilience through shared understanding of varied impacts of bushfires.
- Integration of knowledge and strategies and communications between Community Fire Units, Parkcare groups, Parks and Conservation Service, and Emergency Services.

In order to support community responsibilities in fire management, the government needs to ensure there is:

- a clear outline of processes and timetable for community engage-

ment well in advance of the next round of ACT Bushfire Planning – the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan (SBMP), Regional Fire Management Plans (RFMP) and subsequent annual Bushfire Operational Plans (BOP).

- recognition of the role of local Landcare groups in fire management and appropriate inclusion of Landcarers in planning and delivery of fire management in their areas.
- a dedicated community based 'fire in the environment' platform and network supported by the ACT Government which:
 - * shares references, resources, knowledge, activities, and research,
 - * organises follow-up events to facilitate community connections and promote sharing and learning, and
 - * encourages active involvement in government planning processes such as the SBMP and RFMP.

Christine Goonrey

Innovation and ingenuity: NPA grant to Dr Phil Zylstra

Dr Phil Zylstra has updated the committee on his work on his Forest Flammability Model (FFM) following receipt of an NPA ACT grant late last year.

Using our grant funds he has purchased lab equipment to measure leaf density, an important trait in determining both time to ignition and burning time for leaves. With a colleague at Macquarie University, he is preparing for publication a paper which will integrate this factor into the FFM. This will improve the model's accuracy and move it towards becoming globally applicable.

Phil built this equipment in the great Aussie tradition of innovation. Instead of many thousands of dollars for a state of the art LiCor leaf analyser, he combined a flat-top scanner with his existing moisture analyser and micrometer. It's slower but just as accurate, and much cheaper.

He has also purchased a terrestrial LiDAR (laser scanner). Generally these

cost in the range of \$20k+, but again creative ingenuity has been at work, with crowd-funded inventors using 3D printers and open-source software to build an instrument for about \$3,000. A test scan of the blue-gum forest at the back of Phil's house shows how the device can be used to calculate fuel density. Phil is working on automatically feeding such inputs into the FFM program.

The importance of this work is that, whereas previous fire behaviour prediction models have focused on converting what they measure into weights of fuel or subjective indices, Phil is calculating the actual plant dimensions that you can see in the picture. Crossing that line will mean that not only is the FFM the only peer-reviewed model for our forests but also that measuring inputs will be faster than for the old models, and completely objective.

Phil is being helped in this important work by a number of programmers at the University of Wollongong who are giving

their own time to make user-friendly software for the model. A researcher in China is looking at validating rate of fire spread against data from a Japanese satellite. Once the software is available and the LiDAR data are incorporated, Phil will move into the next phase of setting up and training some labs in Australia, New Zealand and Argentina, and possibly also Siberia. He will present the results of his work to members of the ecological societies of Australia and New Zealand at the EcoTas conference at the end of November.

This is a genuinely innovative grassroots project relying on the contributions of like-minded people. It started with Phil and a candle at his kitchen table and could go on to save lives and millions of dollars in more accurately predicting fire behaviour. NPA ACT is proud to be one of his many supporters.

Christine Goonrey

Report: NPAC annual meeting

The 2017 National Parks Australia Council (NPAC) meeting and AGM were held in Adelaide at the office of the Nature Conservation Society of SA (NCSSA), from Friday morning 10 November 2017 to Sunday noon 12 November. Member groups represented included the NPAs from Queensland, NSW, Victoria, Tasmania and the ACT, as well as NCSSA.

NPAC President Michelle Prior chaired the meeting for the 3 days; VNPA Executive Director Matt Ruchel led the work plan update. Alix Goodwin was welcomed as the new CEO of the NPA (NSW) as was Esther Gallant, the new NPA ACT President. TNPA President Nick Sawyer was there and Laura Hahn from QNPA, as well as Graeme Bartrim from VNPA. NPA ACT's Kevin McCue attended as NPAC Public Officer. NPAC Treasurer Euan Moore was an apology, as were Rod Griffiths, NPAC Vice-president, and Sonja Lenz, NPA ACT.

The main agenda items were the AGM on Sunday morning, at which a new executive committee was elected, and the drafting of a new work plan for the year ahead. In between, members summarised their program over the past year, after which guest speakers discussed a number of topics of interest to members: Prescribed Burning in Protected Areas (*Kirstin Abley – Fire Ecologist, Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources*), The Adelaide International Bird Sanctuary (*Ian Falkenberg – Operations Manager Adelaide International Bird Sanctuary, Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources*) and Nature-based Tourism in Protected Areas (*Chris Thomas – Parks and Tourism Manager, Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources*). Nick Sawyer led discussion on nature-based tourism from TNPA's experience, certainly not all positive.

Over the 3 days we developed the 2018 work plan, building on the excellent work of consultant Dr Sarah May who had polished the *Jewel in the Crown* document that has now morphed into papers on five topics:

- Connecting Nature
- National Parks – Maintaining their Conservation Values
- Marine Protected Areas
- A Matter of National Significance
- Completing the CAR Terrestrial Reserve Networks.

Each of the NPAs offered to edit and complete one document and make a one

page summary. NPA ACT was allocated the conservation topic. The work plan was circulated in December, and includes briefing federal and state ministers on these five key topics.

On Saturday afternoon we joined a field trip to Onkaparinga River National Park to look at sites being developed to allow increased visitor access to the park and associated management issues. Olive trees have seriously invaded the area.

We continued on to the Stipiturus Conservation Park near Mount Compass on the Fleurieu Peninsula where we liaised with Ben Taylor, Nature Glenelg Trust, to look at Glenshera Swamp restoration work. The old drainage ditches have been blocked off at several places with weirs made from sandbags draped with enviro-fabric, and the diverted water encouraged to flow along the original paths back into the bog, the largest on the peninsula.

Luke Price, DEWNR Threatened Fauna Ecologist, accompanied us and then described the prescribed ecological burn intended to assist the recovery of a small Emu Wren population (~4 breeding pairs) inhabiting the threatened Fleurieu Peninsula Swamps. The burn broke containment lines, burned at least double the planned area and was hotter than planned. Luke said the result wasn't all bad and has caused deferment of the next planned burn while the system readjusts, but time will tell.

At the AGM Michelle Prior recontested the election as President, her last year she promised, and Graeme Wiffen was elected Vice-president and Secretary. In his absence Euan Moore (VNPA President) was re-elected Treasurer and Kevin McCue remained Public Officer.

NCSSA's Nicki de Preu and her team, Julia Peacock and NCSSA President Michael Stead, were thanked and commended on their excellent hosting of the 2017 meeting. The venue for the next meeting, Brisbane, was announced, starting 9 November. Nicki was presented with a copy of the popular NPA ACT butterfly book and wished all the best for her 'retirement'.



Quentin Moran (far left) and Esther Gallant (far right) at the Glenshera Swamp restoration work. Photo by Kevin McCue.

Esther and Kevin flew on the 6 am flight direct to Adelaide arriving in time for the meeting start and returned to Canberra on Monday morning. After the NPAC meeting closed at noon Sunday they joined Neil and Bronwyn Strong in the Adelaide Hills who had arranged for them to meet a couple of National Trust Natural Environment stalwarts to talk about work in general and to visit a couple of local reserves.

Simon Lewis, previously an employee of the SA Environment Department and still involved in a voluntary capacity with a number of reserves, as well as FOMS (Friends of Mound Springs) in the far north of SA, led a walk through the HK Fry Reserve, near Crafers, pointing out the remarkable progress they had made with weeding. The area hasn't burned in living memory.

Russ Sinclair, physicist turned botanist/ecologist, a former lecturer at Adelaide University, also toured the HK Fry Reserve with us and then guided us around the Engelbrook Reserve, further afield. Russ is also involved in the long-term Koonamore Project in east central SA for which he has been responsible scientist for many decades. We are grateful we don't have weeds like *Watsonia* and an African Weed Orchid that they had to deal with in addition to Hawthorn and St John's Wort. A bushfire did scorch some of the reserve some 25 years ago, triggered by a local using a brush cutter. We spotted some beautiful Spider Orchids, butterflies and moths, skinks and many birds including Adelaide Rosellas. Fan-tailed Cuckoos were very vocal but unseen. We have used their technique of eradicating Prickly Pear at a site near Bega (cut and dab and hang out all plant material to dry on plastic sheeting) and await confirmation of success.

Kevin McCue

Monitoring the monitor

The dawn chorus at Horse Gully Hut in the Naas Valley in mid December was palpable, led by kookaburras and a strident oriole, supported by a chorus of lyrebirds, magpies, tree-creepers, whistlers and small birds; it lasted a good half hour. The four campers so gloriously awakened were preparing for a long day, arming the southern half of the 21 monitor traps distributed at 400 m intervals along the Naas Firetrail from a few hundred metres south of Horse Gully Hut. They were half of the project team. They met the other half at the midway point after it had 'commuted' from the northern end arming traps. We then did the rounds twice more each day to clear any captures, record details of the captured animals, and finally close the traps for the night ahead.

Don Fletcher (retired, but now an ANU researcher) led the field trip and did most of the preparatory work, assembling the traps, collecting the rabbits and baiting the traps. The other campers were Katherine Jenkins aka Kat (ACT Conservation Research), Matthew Higgins (independent researcher) and Kevin McCue (NPA). The second group of researchers, commuters from Canberra, included Brian Green and Enzo Guarino (University of Canberra), and Deklyn Townsend (ACT Parks and Conservation) or Melissa Snape (ACT Conservation Research).

Once distributed from east to west coasts of southern Australia, Rosenberg's Monitor is now found in just three unconnected patches; at each end and in the centre of its former range. Its status in NSW, Victoria and SA is threatened, so the precautionary

principle would dictate that we assume it is equally threatened in the ACT, at least until proven otherwise. Its close relative, the Lace Monitor, has all but disappeared from the ACT.

Most of the only published research on these amazing, large (to 1.5 m), ground-dwelling reptiles has been undertaken by our co-worker Brian Green and colleagues, on the Kangaroo Island (KI) population. These are only two-thirds the size of ACT specimens. Little research has been done on the local population before now and the first thing that needs to be established is their abundance. Insights into their life history, home range, nesting sites, size, weight etc. will be a bonus.

Because the home range of females was presumed to be smaller than that of males, and their use of habitat and breeding site of more interest to researchers, we had hoped to attach wireless trackers purchased by NPA to two large females (minimum weight 1.6 kg). Only one of the nine captured lizards was female (same ratio on KI), however, and its weight was too close to the minimum. The males were all about 2.5 kg, so after painting ID numbers on their backs (sloughed off at the next moult), Brian kitted up two of them with transmitters. We kept them captive for as short a time as possible and, after numbering them 0 to 8, released them where they were trapped. Two of the nine lizards Deklyn and Enzo managed to run down or snag with Don's 'noose on a fishing pole'; one escaped after capture.

At least we answered one question – can Rosenberg's Goannas climb trees? One example may not mean that all of them can or could, unlike their cousin

the Lace Monitor. Some were carrying ticks and others were scarred, had broken ribs, or had lost the tips of their tails (cars, fighting or predator?) but all appeared to Brian to be in good shape. They were very quiet after being transferred to the hessian or denim bags and didn't rush away on being released. In fact, we caught one twice, so much did he like the dead rabbit bait on offer.

There are now two numbered, randy male Rosenberg's Goannas carrying tracking equipment wandering Naas Valley looking for love and we hope to monitor their activity for as long as possible to establish a database of their movements. If anyone spots a large goanna with a white number on its back we would appreciate a report giving the date, time and location. They mate in December, the females every second year, and lay about a dozen eggs in a nest excavated by the female in a termite mound. The clutch is guarded for 2–3 weeks by their mother, sometimes with help from her mate (see Matthew Higgins' article in the June 2017 *NPA Bulletin*). The young, not always from the same male progenitor, hatch after about 8 months and feed on their hosts, the termites, before digging themselves out of the mound.

Kat, Deklyn and/or Mel drove us skilfully on the trip and around the traps. So interesting are these creatures that Brian is planning to publish a book on the Rosenberg's Monitor this year. We will notify you when it happens.

In January and February, under Don Fletcher's guiding hand, new teams, including NPA members Sonja Lenz, Philip and Jan Gatenby, Isobel Crawford and John Brickhill, installed 56 cameras at 19 sites along the central part of the Naas Valley, the cameras focussed on a bait of putrid chicken, to start studying the monitors' distribution and density. We have downloaded data and resited and reset the cameras and traps, Don and Enzo even reattached the collar on one of the monitors and retrieved the discarded collar of the other. Invaluable, interesting information has already been obtained on our Monitors in the Naas Valley guaranteeing the success of the pilot project to trap, mark and track them.

Kevin McCue

(continued next page)

*Rosenberg's Monitor No 1 marked and measured before return to its capture site.
Photo by Kevin McCue.*



Strategy for managing feral horses in the Alpine National Park

All of the national parks across Australia's alpine region are facing sustained pressure from feral horses. NPA ACT members have first-hand experience of the degradation of some of Australia's most iconic sites. So the NPA ACT was pleased to see the issue of a draft strategic action plan ('the Plan') for feral horses in Victoria's Alpine National Park (ANP). The Plan outlined five objectives:

- Reduce damage to alpine wetland and other vegetation communities by expanding and improving feral horse control.
- Improve knowledge of the relationship between feral horse impacts and environmental condition through monitoring and research.
- Protect Aboriginal cultural heritage.
- Prevent the establishment of new populations of feral horses in the Greater Alpine national parks.
- Remove small populations.

In its recent submission to Parks Victoria, the NPA ACT welcomed the general thrust of the Plan, being the active and humane reduction of the numbers of feral horses in the ANP,

utilising a strategic and evidence-based approach. However, the NPA ACT questioned whether the long timescale involved in reducing the feral horse population and the size of the proposed remnant population will lead to efficient, effective and economic management of the feral horse population in the ANP.

In general, the NPA ACT supported:

- the expanded horse control program, which would focus on increased feral horse removal and the prevention of the establishment of new populations within the ANP
- the five key core conservation objectives of the Plan
- the Plan's recognition of, and emphasis on, protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage and working with traditional owners
- the removal of all horses from the highly ecologically sensitive Bogong High Plains–Cobungra area
- the introduction of a systematic and realistic monitoring and evaluation system, featuring annual reviews of the efficiency and effectiveness of the feral horse control operations
- plans to undertake practical, applied

research on key feral horse control issues.

The NPA ACT was concerned that the Plan:

- severely limits the number of feral horses to be removed from the eastern Alps over the next 3 years, given the level and extent of damage that they are causing to this area
- excludes ground and aerial shooting as a control method during the first 3 years of Plan implementation, solely on the basis of public expectations, when there is evidence that, when properly done, it is the most inexpensive and humane way of managing feral animals
- fails to recognise the importance of prioritising the removal of all feral horses from the Murray River catchment area.

The full version of the NPA ACT's submission can be found at <http://www.npaact.org.au/>.

Rod Griffiths

Monitoring the monitor (continued)

References

- Gogerley, H. 1922. Early breeding of ground or low-nesting birds. *Emu* 21, 222–223.
- Weavers, B.W. 1989. Diet of the Lace Monitor Lizard (*Varanus varius*) in south-eastern Australia. *Australian Zoologist*, 25(3), 83 (September 1989).

Notes from Weavers' paper:

- Gogerley (1922) speculated that some species of 'low-nesting birds' including the superb lyrebird (*Menura superba*), nest during winter to avoid predation by the Goanna (*Varanus varius*).
- Weavers collected stomach contents or scats from 52 trapped *V. varius* and four samples from specimens at the Australian Museum. Remains of exotic mammals were identified in 38 per cent of the samples, native mammal remains were in 36 per cent, and all mammals combined were represented in 78 per cent of samples ... At least

38 per cent of the samples contained carrion. Cat (*Felis catus*) was the only species of mammal, exotic or native, observed at Bendethera that did not appear in the dietary samples from the site.

- Clearly, introduced mammals are now a major part of the diet of *V. varius* in the study areas. However, it should not be assumed automatically that the introduction of exotic mammals to south-eastern Australia has been of net benefit to *V. varius*. Certainly

some of them (e.g. cattle, horses, rabbits and probably sheep) have become food for the lace monitor, but the provision of grazing land for these exotic animals has dramatically reduced the mature forest available in south-eastern Australia for *V. varius* and its native prey. Additionally, introduced exotic mammals such as dogs, cats and foxes prey on smaller *V. varius*.

- Many types of large food items e.g. rabbits, adult birds, macropod carrion, and small food items e.g. arthropods are all taken by *V. varius* of a wide range of lengths. The very smallest *V. varius* had dined on grey kangaroo (*Macropus giganteus*) while large Lace Monitors were recorded taking Lepidoptera larvae as well as larger items.



Taking the vital statistics.
Photo by Kevin McCue.

Selling NPA books at Jerrabomberra



To celebrate World Wetlands Day 2018, the Jerrabomberra Wetlands and Canberra City Farm had their Open Day on Saturday 3 February. The NPA ACT was invited to have a stall, so a small number of members gathered to sell our ACT nature field guides and the Namadgi book. We were able to roster selling books with browsing the other displays of plant-, animal- and water-related products and issues in the ACT. The Canberra City Farm is only 2 years old but has developed into a productive system. It was a pleasant evening with mild weather. We managed to sell a few books and, with a good view of the wetlands, we also witnessed a spoonbill frantically feeding in the shallow water. The stalls also provided healthy food options for a light meal.

Julie May, photo by Kevin McCue.

Reference:

<https://jerrabomberrawetlands.org.au/event/world-wetlands-open-day-2/>



NPA Art Week(s) at Gudgenby Cottage

Yet another successful NPA Art Week at Gudgenby Cottage was held last December (postponed from October).

Maria Boreham again generously provided tuition to interested participants (Bruce Boreham's feathers at right), as well as spending some time on her own botanical art work. Hazel Rath also worked on a beautiful painting of native flora. John Brickhill produced an amazing 'boat mat' by coiling rope in a celtic knot-like pattern (photo left).

Another week for enjoying the inspiration provided by this wonderful location is planned for May this year. See **Outings Program** for information.



Marine scientist and sportsman Joe Baker dies in Canberra

From an obituary by Jennifer King, ABC News website

Professor Joseph Thomas Baker, inaugural Commissioner for the Environment of the ACT, died in Canberra on 16 January 2018, aged 85. Joe was a world leader in his field and a trusted advisor to governments.

In his 50-year scientific career, he championed environmental sustainability and was deeply involved in achieving World Heritage status for the Great Barrier Reef in 1981. His research focused on preserving the marine life around Australia and promoting sustainable resource management.

Joe Baker was born at Warwick, Queensland on 19 June 1932 and moved to Brisbane in 1950 as a cadet with CSIRO and to study chemistry at the University of Queensland. Dr Baker's 1967 PhD thesis examined the pharmacology of purple dyes in molluscs, the Tyrian purple of the ancients.

He married in 1955 and is survived by his wife Val, their four children and nine grandchildren.

In 1959 he played lock in the Queensland Rugby League side in matches against NSW and NZ teams. In



1961, Dr Baker started the James Cook University (JCU) Rugby League Football Club as coach.

In 1982, Dr Baker was awarded an OBE for services to marine science and, in 2002, the Order of Australia for his contribution to environmental studies and chemistry.

In 2001 he was named one of the first five Queensland Greats, and was nominated for an Australian of the Year award in 2006.

Dr Baker was reportedly greatly saddened in 2017 to see the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) forced to argue a case to the World Heritage Commission to avoid the reef being listed as 'in danger'. 'To me

this was a terrible insult to Australia and Australians', he said. 'It told us we were not able to look after one of our most valuable natural assets.'

Among his many achievements, Dr Baker founded aquaculture and marine biodiscovery research at the Australian Institute of Marine Science in Townsville, resulting in a significant contribution to the growth of Queensland's prawn industry. He was a founder of the GBRMPA and of the Queensland Academy of Sport, and a foundation staff member at James Cook University.

Other highlights of his career.

Director, Roche Research Institute of Marine Pharmacology
Director, Australian Institute of Marine Science
Director, Sir George Fisher Centre for Tropical Marine Studies at JCU
Chief Scientist, Queensland DPI and Fisheries
Chairman, National Landcare Council
Chairman, Australian Heritage Commission
Patron, Australian Marine Sciences Association.

Di Thompson OAM

The Medal of the Order of Australia awarded to long-term NPA ACT member Dianne Thompson on Australia Day 2018, for 'service to conservation and the environment', is the most recent of a number of awards that she has received over the past few years.

In 2014 the NSW NPA presented her with the Prudence Tucker State Conservation Award, for 'substantial contributions to significant state-wide conservation outcomes'. In 2015 the NPA ACT presented her with the first President's Award for her environmental advocacy work against high-impact use of natural areas, especially in Kosciuszko National Park (KNP), addressing the threats from feral animals, especially horses, and for her work to identify outbreaks of noxious Orange Hawkweed.

Dianne's involvement with the environment began with a love of the outdoors and camping. She took up an active role with NPA ACT in the mid 1980s, leading day, then adventurous multi-day pack walks and popular family car camps, activities many of us have been lucky enough to share with her. She held roles as Vice President and Outings Convener in the 1990s. She has contributed to many work parties, including the restoration of Orroral Homestead in the early 1980s, through to removing pine wildings and briar roses in the ACT. From 1989 she organised several work parties to

improve walking tracks in the Budawangs in NSW.

Dianne maintains an active membership of the Canberra Bushwalking Club (since 1967) and Kosciuszko Huts Association (since 1982) but has always held a major allegiance to NPA ACT.

For 6 years Dianne was the conservation representative on the Namadgi Interim Board of Management. She is a strong advocate for Aboriginal people to have a real say in the management of parks and other natural areas, and in decisions that affect their rights and the maintenance of their cultures.

Increasingly, Dianne realised that KNP on our doorstep was far from the pristine park it should be and became an active member of the NSW NPA and the peak body Nature Conservation Council (NCC) where she plays a major role in familiarising their leadership with the issues in KNP. She is the NCC representative on a number of bodies including:

- Southern Ranges Regional Advisory Committee (formerly Snowy Mountains Region Advisory Committee), since 2000
- Snowy Monaro Bushfire Management Committee, since 2007
- Perisher Range Resort Environmental Management Committee, since 2012
- Environmental Water Advisory Group, since 2010



Photo by Esther Gallant.

- National Parks and Wildlife Service Advisory Council, New South Wales, since 2014.

Dianne's love of the mountains is reflected in her tribute to the power of recovery from natural events in *Ring of Fire 2003*, a publication of stunning photographs she took in the weeks and months after the devastating 2003 bushfires through KNP and the ACT.

Dianne has continued her advocacy for the environment with integrity and courage to preserve our Australian environment for all to share into the future. It is fitting that this honour to such an inspirational Australian was awarded on Australia Day.

Congratulations from the NPA.

Annette Smith

Coming back

It looks cold out there. Out there is in here. On the gallery wall with images of snow, snow people, snow mists.* I have this dream. I'm skiing back and it's gently downhill. I glide with no effort. Perhaps I'm not even on skis. Just glissading on my feet. Just the right speed. Gentle, controlled, running out. Coming back. Coming back to what?

twilight descends
before the afternoon
has finished
this short day ends
long night begins

I have another dream. I'm running cross country. Competing, perhaps. My running is effortless, smooth, contained. I'm full of breath, mobile, flexible and I'm out in front. The countryside may be a bit rough but I flow over it. This dream never lasts very long.

And in real life it never was. Or were there glimpses? Skiing was always an effort. Hard work. And I didn't like going downhill; falling over. And running was also hard work. I did jog for a few years, but it was an effort. I got breathless and had tendon problems.

It was hillwalking where I really flowed. Early on that was hard work too, but later I tuned in. Every hill has its mantra. Love that micro-navigation. Body knowing where it's going to be in a few steps time.

loping down
the forest track
through moonlight –
in my body the rhythm
of descending scales

Gerry Jacobson

*Denise Ferris, 'The Colour of Snow', inkjet print, 2013, Canberra Museum and Gallery

What's happening in NSW national parks?

The following is compiled from newspaper articles. Ed.

Last year marked 50 years since a New South Wales Liberal premier established the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) to protect the jewels in the crown of NSW's natural environment.

In 1986, the NSW NPWS was lauded as one of the top five national park agencies in the world. It hosts more than 40 million visits in New South Wales each year, and an overwhelming 94 per cent of visitors describe themselves as satisfied or very satisfied with their experience, and yet, despite this endorsement, an experienced ranger like Michael McFadyen, who joined the NPWS in 1975, was made redundant in 2015.

NPWS rangers, firefighters, ecologists and pest control officers are protectors of nature with conservation at the heart of their responsibilities. In the 2015 redundancy round, the organisation lost so many experienced staff at once that it has never recovered. All these people had no time to pass on their knowledge and experience to those who were left. The combined loss was incalculable.

Since then there have been even more reorganisations and redundancies. The number of rangers employed has dropped from about 300 to just over 200 under the present government. Three hundred rangers was already insufficient.

In the latest restructure, the organisation is claiming that there will be more frontline staff but, in reality, frontline staff numbers are being cut, along with back office staff who support those on the front line. Those who survive will have their pay cut. Around Taree, field officers will suffer pay cuts of up to \$12,200 a year, while still having to do the same work. Hundreds of staff are being affected, including those responsible for invasive species and fire management.

Services in Botany Bay National Park have dropped dramatically and this is being repeated all over NSW. Sturt National Park in the far north-western corner of the state and Kinchega National Park near Broken Hill have historic infrastructure that is falling apart due to lack of money for maintenance.

Royal National Park, the jewel of the NSW park system and the second-oldest

national park in the world, has a fraction of the staff that it had when it first came under NPWS management in 1967. This has been repeated in parks like Kosciuszko, Warrumbungle and New England.

It is telling that only nine new parks have been created since the Liberal state government came to power in 2011. Compare that to the previous Labor government, which created 500 new parks. The government has slashed budgets as well as jobs, allocating less than \$8 million for land acquisition for national parks under permanent protection this year. That's a third of the funding allocated to administer new land-clearing laws that will do irreparable damage to biodiversity in NSW.

Last year NPWS celebrated the 50th anniversary of the service, but there were no celebratory announcements; no new iconic national park, no upgrade to an existing park's infrastructure, no increase in staffing or funding. Nothing but cuts.

Kevin McCue

Bushwalk

Yerrabi Pond

Date: 4 February 2018

Participants: Brian Slee (leader),
Francesca Bate, Mike Bremers,
Max Lawrence

Weather: Sunny, mild.

Yerrabi Pond's pelicans have gone. Not the real ones, they are still plentiful, but the pair of lifelike Neil Dickinson sculptures which have perched on a semi-submerged tree trunk near Bizant Street for many years. No one in the passing parade could tell us their fate but a Google search reveals they were removed for restoration in December and will soon be returned.

Something else to celebrate: a new walker! Welcome Francesca. We had gathered at 9 am at Phyllis Ashton Circuit, Gungahlin, for a morning walk around the lake, with an extension into Forde. All went well for a few minutes as we followed the path east. Where Horse Park Drive crosses Ginninderra Creek, the bridge is being duplicated and pedestrians are abandoned to their fate. So, dodging fences and tapes, we rock-hopped into Lyall Gillespie Corridor, which leads into Forde.

Here the impounded water, as in the lake, was remarkably clear. However, the most delightful aspect of walking in Forde is seeking out its ancient *Eucalyptus melliodora*, Yellow Boxes. One beautifully shaped example in Lomax Street, behind the shops, is registered with the ACT Government: 19 m high, 3.6 m in circumference. And anyone who thinks Gungahlin's suburbs are crowded ghettos should check out the open spaces of Forde.

After wandering the area we returned to the shops only to find *Frankies* had lots of customers but no power. Distressing for the owners but we had a pleasant break, sans coffee. From there we slipped down Francis Forde Boulevard, hazarded our way back across Horse Park Drive and followed the path along the western side of the lake in Amaroo. A black swan waddled up the bank, nodding to display its brilliant red bill. Quickly discerning that bread was not on offer, it floated off, all the while elegantly probing the grassy depths.

We took an unscheduled diversion at Barrington Crescent up past Palmer Trig to visit the super massive (but unlisted) Corrigle Close Yellow Box before returning to the lake via Lett Place. The lake still teems with waterbirds, but a couple in the group also spied a Superb Parrot resting in a tree. Back about noon. Coffee was at *Da Nunzio* – nice place to linger at the end of an easy 9 km walk.

Brian Slee

A subantarctic adventure

During the 2017–18 Christmas holiday period I was able to scratch a longstanding ‘itch’ with a visit to Macquarie Island in Australia’s subantarctic.

Located half-way between Australia and Antarctica, Macquarie Island and the surrounding waters to three nautical miles is managed as a nature reserve by the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service. It was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1997 in recognition of its outstanding geological and natural values. Scientific research is a major focus for the island and the Australian Antarctic Division has maintained a base there since 1948.

Readers of the NPA *Bulletin* may be familiar with the ecological restoration work carried out on ‘Macca’ over the past few decades, culminating in the successful eradication of rabbits and rodents in 2011 – arguably one of our greatest conservation achievements. The island is also (justly) famous for its wealth of wildlife and its challenging weather. I was keen to experience the island for myself and a 12-day voyage to the islands of the subantarctic with New Zealand company Heritage Expeditions on the *Spirit of Enderby* allowed me to do just that.

Visitor access to Macquarie is tightly controlled to protect its values, and our stay was restricted to two 4-hour

landings, at all times escorted by TPWS and Antarctic Division staff to guard against disturbance to breeding penguins and other wildlife. While it may sound like a long way to travel for such a brief time on-island, these restrictions in no way diminished the immense sense of achievement in setting foot on this remote speck of land in the middle of the ‘Furious Fifties’. It was an absolute privilege to walk along the black sand beach at Sandy Bay surrounded by literally thousands of King and Royal Penguins and hundreds of enormous Elephant Seals, as well as marauding skuas, Giant Petrels and other seabirds, all oblivious to human presence. This was truly an amazing wildlife experience which I shall never forget.

While Macquarie Island was undoubtedly my personal highlight, ‘Macca’ was actually only a small part of the overall trip. The voyage also visited three (the Snares, the Auckland Islands and Campbell Island) of the five island groups that together comprise the New Zealand Subantarctic Islands World Heritage site. All provided great experiences, each having its own spectacular flora and fauna. Zodiac cruises at all three provided close-up views of wildlife, and extended walks at the Auckland Islands and Campbell Island allowed expeditioners to really experience both the harshness and

beauty of these places that are so remote from human habitation. While nothing was going to beat ‘Macca’, a particular surprise for me was the diversity of vegetation, such as on the Auckland Islands where low stands of rata* forest along the more sheltered east and south coastline were an unexpected delight to walk through (even when pursued by a grumpy New Zealand Sea Lion!).

While the NPA *Bulletin* is not a promotional organ, I can’t speak too highly of the quality of the trip run by Heritage



The author with part of a colony of Royal Penguins, Macquarie Island.

Expeditions. There was a strong emphasis on health and safety (necessary given the rough sea conditions and the sometimes tricky transfers to Zodiacs) and biosecurity (regular checks for seeds in gear and clothing, routine boot-washing) was also a high priority to guard against introduction of weeds and pests. Frequent lectures by expedition staff provided detailed information about the history of the islands and their values.

These sorts of trips are certainly not for everybody – they are, after all, expeditions not cruises. I was fortunate in that the weather for my trip was unusually favourable but it is important to remember that access to the islands is dependent on the prevailing conditions and is by no means guaranteed. Those contemplating going should do their research to be sure it is the right type of trip for them. But, for anyone fascinated with wildlife and drawn to the world’s few remaining wild places, I can heartily recommend a visit to the subantarctic!

Doug Brown**

*A forest tree, *Metrosideros umbellata*, endemic to New Zealand.

**Doug is an original member of the Gudgeby Bush Regeneration Group



King Penguins on a stony beach, Macquarie Island. Photo by Doug Brown

In Patagonia

This trip of 10 days (8–17 February 2017) was an add-on to the Antarctica trip reported in the December NPA *Bulletin*. Eight passengers from the Antarctic trip had booked as well and six more joined us (two from the UK, two from New Zealand and two more Aussies), so it was a compact group of 14. Our leader this time was Lelia Cataldi (an Argentinian) and she proved to be very capable indeed! The purpose of the trip was to explore the Torres del Paine National Park (Chile), the Puerto Moreno Glacier and Los Glaciares National Park (Argentina). This was part trekking (three treks of 22 km), part touring and I had established, before leaving Australia, that the longer treks were optional, as these, unfortunately, are now beyond me. The others were as fit as fiddles and coped admirably with whatever life threw at them, including a very wet day (the only one) in Los Glaciares National Park.

We met up with the new group in Punta Arenas and I made use of the extra day by going to an ethnic park in which was traced settlement from prehistoric times (12,000 years ago) up until the influx of outsiders in the 19th century. This was a history not unlike our own, as gold had been discovered and suppression of the indigenous people followed the incursion.

The next day we started our Patagonia tour. Initially we travelled by bus to Puerto Natales and then by modern catamaran up the fiord, Ultimo Esperanza, to view the Monte Balmaceda Glacier. We saw condors en route, evidence of cattle ranching and a small cormorant colony. The next day we travelled by bus to view Toro Lake and then on to the Pehoe Lookout. This was a very windy spot, with assistance needed in many places. The Pehoe Hotel where we had lunch had a superb view of Torres del Paine and again we were



El Chalten and Los Glaciares National Park,

treated to magnificent weather. I did a shorter walk with Lelia after lunch, while the others tackled a more difficult walk in preparation for their treks further into the trip. Lelia and I were treated, as we saw over 100 guanacos grazing, as well as some lesser rheas (similar to our emus). We also saw some condors and a harrier. There was much evidence of pumas hunting in this area as there were many carcasses on the ground. They are quite elusive, and we would be lucky to spot one. That night a beautiful barbecue awaited us back at the hotel. Like the Aussies, most Argentinians enjoy their meat!

The next day, after a relaxing night, the others set off into the Torres del Paine National Park. The weather was superb. I did shorter walks around the hotel and had a massage for some back issues I was having. The others came back exhilarated and we were treated to another superb meal in the hotel. We then moved eastwards across the Patagonian Steppe. It's not unlike outback Australia in many respects, except the soil is grey. The roads are still straight, the cafes isolated (300 km between them and their nearest opposition) and there is evidence of prehistoric remains. We arrived in Los Glaciares to absolutely superb weather, and Lelia warned us that this is not always the case (just like the Snowies). Just as she predicted, the next morning

was raining heavily but the intrepid trekkers still set off to reach a viewpoint of Cerro Torre (needle-like pinnacle) and Fitzroy Base Camp. It is part of a chain of massive glaciers that basically follow the line of the Chilean/Argentinian border and from all accounts was quite spectacular.

Continuing on our journey, we moved on to view the superb Perito Moreno glacier. This is 4 km wide and the park management has built excellent viewing platforms and developed raised metal paths (not unlike the ones going to Mount Kosciuszko).

A few hours were spent here before we travelled on to El Calafate, our final destination before departure. En route we were fortunate to see a group of condors feasting on a kill. We also managed to see some flamingoes feeding in a lake – the 'icing on the cake'!

Our adventure was over and we all went our separate ways after an incredible 28 days of visiting some of the most pristine areas in the world. It was time to reflect on the wonderful sights we had experienced and to hope that these areas are preserved for future generations to enjoy. As I said at the start of my account, this was, for me, the trip of a lifetime.

Barbara Slotemaker de Bruine

Photos provided by the author:



Guanacos grazing.



Face of Perito Moreno Glacier where it calves into Lago Argentino.

NPA outings program

March – June 2018



Bushwalk Grading Guide

Distance grading (per day)

- 1 up to 10 km
- 2 10 km to 15 km
- 3 15 km to 20 km
- 4 above 20 km

Terrain grading

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| A Road, fire trail or track | E Rock scrambling |
| B Open forest | F Exploratory |
| C Light scrub | |
| D Patches of thick scrub, regrowth | |

Day walks Carry lunch and snacks, drinks, protective clothing, a first aid kit and any required medication.

Pack walks Two or more days. Carry all food and camping requirements. CONTACT LEADER EARLY.

Car camps Facilities often limited. Vehicles taken to site can be used for camping. CONTACT LEADER EARLY.

Work parties Carry items as for day walks plus work gloves and any tools required. Work party details and location sometimes change, check NPA website, www.npaact.org.au, for any last minute changes.

Other activities include ski trips, canoe trips, nature rambles and environment or field guide studies.

Wednesday walks (WW). Medium or somewhat harder walks arranged on a joint NPA, BBC (*Brindabella Bushwalking Club*) and CBC (*Canberra Bushwalking Club*) basis for fit and experienced club walkers. Notification and details are only emailed to members registered for WW. Only NPA-hosted WW are shown in this program. For WW email registration, contact the *Outings Convener*.

Transport The NPA suggests a passenger contribution to transport costs of **40 cents per kilometre** for the distance driven divided by the number of occupants of the car including the driver, rounded to the nearest dollar. The amount may be varied at the discretion of the leader. Drive and walk distances shown in the program are approximate for return journeys.

*NPA ACT members undertaking walks or other activities in this program are advised they should have **PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE** or, at least, **AMBULANCE COVER** in case of an accident requiring evacuation by ambulance or helicopter.*

Points to note

Please help keep our outings program alive by volunteering to lead outings. New leaders are welcome. The *Outings Convener* is happy to suggest locations suitable for a walk if you do not have something in mind. Feel free to send in suggestions for outings with a suggested date to the *Outings Convener* by email to outings@npaact.org.au

All persons joining an outing of the *National Parks Association of the ACT* do so as volunteers in all respects and as such accept responsibility for any injury howsoever incurred and the National Parks Association of the ACT, its office bearers and appointed leaders, are absolved from any liability in respect of injury or damage suffered whilst engaged in any such outing.

In voluntarily participating in these activities conducted by the NPA ACT, participants should be aware that they could be exposed to risks that could lead to injury, illness or death or to loss of or damage to property. These risks could include but are not limited to slippery and/or uneven surfaces, rocks being dislodged, falling at edges of cliffs or drops or elsewhere, risks associated with crossing creeks, hypothermia, heat exhaustion and the risks associated with any of the Special Hazards listed on the *Attendance Record and Risk Waiver Form* provided by the leader at the activity.

To minimise these risks participants should endeavour to ensure that the activity is within their capabilities and that they are carrying food, water, equipment, clothing and footwear appropriate to the activity. Participants should advise the leader if they are taking any medication or have any physical or other limitation that might affect their participation in the activity. Participants should make every effort to remain with the rest of the party during the activity and accept the instructions of the leader. By signing the *Attendance Record and Risk Waiver Form* participants agree that they understand these requirements and have considered the risks before choosing to sign the form and waiver any claim for damages arising from the activity that they might have against the association, the leader or any other participants in tort or contract.

Children under 18 years of age are welcome to come on NPA ACT activities provided they are accompanied by a parent, guardian or close relative. Parents or Guardians will be required to sign a specific *Risk Waiver for a Child* form.

Leaders to note. Please send copies of completed *Attendance Record and Risk Waiver Forms* to Brian Slee, contact 6281 0719 or brianslee@iprimus.com.au
NPA has a Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) available to leaders. The PLB can be obtained from Steven Forst, contact 0428 195 236 or steven.forst@iinet.net.au



Tasman National Park. Photo by Ed Highley.

NPA outings program March – June 2018 (page 2 of 4)

4 March Sunday walk Three Mile Dam

Depart 7 am. Drive via Kiandra to Three Mile Dam. Walk north along Great Dividing Range and Wallaces Creek Fire Trail and return via local hills. In afternoon, follow Ravine Road to Wallaces Creek Lookout. Spectacular views to western depths of Kosciuszko National Park. Afternoon tea Adaminaby. Contact leader by Saturday morning for meeting place.

Drive: 280 km, \$112 per car.

Maps: Cabramurra, Ravine 1:25,000;

Rooftop's *Kiandra–Tumut Map*

Grading: 2 A/B/C/F

Leader: Brian Slee

Contact: 6281 0719 (h) or

brianslee@iprimus.com.au

10 March Saturday work party Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group

Meet at the Namadgi Visitor Centre, Tharwa at 9:15 am. Car pool to Gudgenby Valley. Weeding and spraying north of Gudgenby Cottage towards Peppermint Hill. Tools provided.

Leader: Michael Goonrey

Contact: 0419 494 142 or

michaelgoonrey@gmail.com

18 March Sunday walk Tidbinbilla Range

A walk along the Tidbinbilla Range from the north. Parking at the locked gate at northern end of the Tidbinbilla Range Fire Trail and following the trail along the upwardly undulating ridgeline through alpine groves and meadows. Expect good views along the way. The lunch spot will be determined by the speed of the group and how many interesting things we find along the way. Potential to return via same route or alternative fire trails as available. Meet at Coleman Court (behind McDonald's) at 8:15 am.

Drive: 50 km, \$20 per car.

Maps: Tidbinbilla, Cotter Dam 1:25,000

Grading: 2/3 A

Leader: Rod Griffiths

Contact: 0410 875 731 or

rod.blackdog@gmail.com

24 March Saturday walk Mount Major and Minors

This walk in Tallaganda National Park offers a variety of terrain, vegetation and geology, and some good views. It starts and ends on the Jinglemoney Fire Trail east of Rossi, climbs to the summit of Mount Major with its Snow Gums and Snow Grass, descends to a saddle before climbing again to the summit of the first of the two 'minors'. A descent to another saddle follows and the final climb to the

2nd 'minor', which is really a long ridge with some scrambling and rainforest. From there we have a long descent back to the cars. About 12 km and 600 m climb. High clearance vehicles needed. Meet at Spotlight car park, Kings Highway, Queanbeyan, for a prompt departure at 8:30 am.

Drive 90 km, \$36 per car.

Map: Bombay 1:25,000

Grading: 2 A/C/D/E

Leader: Barrie R

Contact: 0437 023 140

24 March Saturday work party Poplar Control – Blundells Flat

NPA commenced work on this site in March 2017. The area has heritage-listed exotics but the weeds include wilding exotics and the usual suspects – plenty to do. Some tools provided but a bush saw and/or loppers and gloves would be handy. Meet at Coleman Court (behind McDonald's) at 8:15 am.

Drive: 45 km, \$18 per car.

Leader: Martin Chalk

Contact: 6292 3502 or 0411 161 056

28 March Wednesday walk Joint NPA / BBC / CBC activity

Details are emailed to those on the Wednesday walks email list. Otherwise contact the leader.

Leader: Steven Forst

Contact: 0428 195 236 or

steven.forst@iinet.net.au

30 March – 2 April Easter camp Forests Forever Easter Ecology Camp

Easter in the heart of East Gippsland's forests

Be guided by expert ecologists revealing the delicate workings of these ancient ecosystems, be awed by the diversity of a pristine rainforest and be outraged by the logging and continuing destruction. See the interesting write up by Judy Kelly in the September 2015 NPA ACT *Bulletin* of her Easter 2015 trip: <http://www.npaact.org.au/res/File/Bulletins7/Vol%2052%20No%203%20Sep%202015.pdf>. The camp is on the Errinundra Plateau in East Gippsland Central Victoria. You will see and learn about spectacular forest threatened with logging and be helping the campaign for vital forest protection. Some of the places to be visited are mountain tops, old growth forests, rainforests, alpine wetlands, and we learn about these areas (and the politics of their management) from expert biologists and forest campaigners. For more information see: <http://eastgippsland.net.au/forestsforever>. Make your own bookings and associated payments early as numbers are limited

this year. Registration \$75 for adults (\$50 concession and teens) or \$35 a day (\$25 concession and teens), under 13s free. Contact the leader so we know who is going from NPA ACT and to discuss transport arrangements.

Drive: 600–800 km

Map: Rooftop's *Cann River–Orbost–Delegate Adventure Map*

Leader: Di

Contact: 0401 590 046 or

garyt@iinet.net.au

8 April Sunday walk Rob Roy Falls

A walk from suburban Banks along a rocky creek with gorge, to a usually dry waterfall down a rock face west of Rob Roy. Climb to the top of the falls and circuit around over Rob Roy to Big Monk Trig and back steeply down to Banks. Some of this walk is across open grassland without shade.

Meet at Kambah Village Shops to leave at 8:30 am.

Drive: 30 km, \$12 per car.

Map: Tuggeranong 1:25,000

Grading: 2 A/E

Leader: Mike S

Contact: 0412 179 907

14 April Saturday work party Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group

Meet at the Namadgi Visitor Centre, Tharwa at 9:15 am. Car pool to Gudgenby Valley. Weeding and spraying around Frank and Jacks Hut. Check on plantings. Tools provided.

Leader: Clive Hurlstone

Contact: 6288 7592 or

cjhurls@bigpond.net.au

15 April Sunday walk Isaacs Ridge

Meet 9:00 am at Callemonda Rise, O'Malley, near intersection with Akame Circuit (UBD map 78, Q2). After a quick look at Scrivener Hill, climb steeply south-east up Isaacs Ridge to Sheaffe Trig (793 m) and then past a series of ugly communication towers on top of ridge to Stanley Trig (841 m). Retrace part of way, descend and then climb Mount Mugga (812 m). Circle peak and return to start. Huge trees, great views.

Maps: Canberra, Tuggeranong 1:25,000

Grading: 2 A/B/E

Leader: Brian Slee

Contact: 6281 0719 (h) or

brianslee@iprimus.com.au

Week starting 16 April Mid-week 3-day work party at Dananbilla

Contact: Martin Chalk on 0411 161 056 for details and arrangements.

**21–22 April Weekend of walks
Mount Banks and Mount
Solitary**

Two wonderful walks to iconic Blue Mountains peaks over 2 days. We will likely do the shorter, easier Mount Banks on the first day and the harder, longer Mount Solitary on the Sunday. This will, however, depend on weather. Mount Solitary is a 5-hour 14 km walk involving clambering over sandstone. Therefore this is a walk for fit walkers only. I will be staying at the Carrington Hotel in Katoomba on the Saturday night, but other participants might prefer alternative accommodation. Departure Canberra at 8:30 am Saturday. Contact leader by Monday 16 April to indicate interest.

Drive: 660 km, \$264 per car.

Map: Jamieson 1:25,000

Grading: 2 A/E

Leader: David Dedenczuk

Contact: 0417 222 154 or

ddedentz@bigpond.net.au

**25 April Wednesday walk
Joint NPA / BBC / CBC activity**

Details are emailed to those on the Wednesday walks email list. Otherwise contact the leader.

Leader: Philip Gatenby

Contact: 0401 415 446 or

philip.gatenby@gmail.com

**28 April Saturday work party
Weed control, Brandy Flat Fire
Trail**

This will be the second NPA work party in this area. The location is about 1 km along the fire trail from Glendale Depot. All tools provided, but bring gloves. Meet at Kambah Village at 8:30 am.

Drive: 74 km, \$30 per car.

Leader: Martin Chalk

Contact: 0411 161 056

**5 May Saturday walk
Round Mountain**

Round Mountain is on the north-western side of the Budawangs and offers good views of the mountainous country to the east. The walk is from the Nerriga entrance to Morton National Park and is mostly off-track, with patches of thick scrub and a cliff line to negotiate. A number of creek and river crossings are also involved. Total climb of about 400 m. Early start needed. Contact leader by Thursday 3 May, preferably by email, for start time and transport arrangements.

Drive: 250 km, \$100 per car.

Map: Endrick 1:25,000

Grading: 3 A/D/E

Leader: Philip Gatenby

Contact: 0401 415 446 or

philip.gatenby@gmail.com

**12 May Saturday work party
Gudgenby Bush Regeneration
Group**

Meet at the Namadgi Visitor Centre, Tharwa at 9:15 am. Car pool to Gudgenby Valley. Hawthorn removal around Gudgenby Cottage. Tools provided.

Leader: Kevin McCue

Contact: 6251 1291 or

mccue.kevin@gmail.com

**13 May Sunday walk
Pabral Road to Mount Coree**

Walking on the ACT border straight line off Pabral Road. Hiking up to Pabral Road from Blundells Flat, then SW through the top of Musk Creek towards Mount Coree. This is very rough country with strong regrowth and will involve some scrambling near Mount Coree. Return via roads. Up to 13 km and 600 m climb. Fit and experienced walkers only. Contact leader by Thursday 10 May to indicate interest. Meet at Weston Creek (Cooleman Court) car park 8:00 am.

Drive: 45 km, \$18 per car.

Map: Cotter Dam 1:25,000

Grading: 2 A/D/E

Leader: David Dedenczuk

Contact: 0417 222 154 or [dde-](mailto:dde-dentz@bigpond.net.au)

[dte-dentz@bigpond.net.au](mailto:dde-dentz@bigpond.net.au)

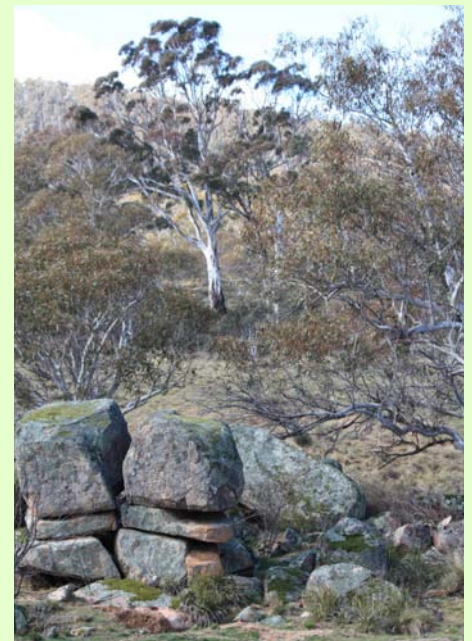
**18–25 May Friday to Friday
Art Week at Gudgenby Cottage**

A comfortable, warm cottage which sleeps 6 people overnight. Take inspiration to work on any artistic endeavour with convivial company at the cottage, or explore the valley during the day with a cosy base each evening. Paint, draw, write, weave, photograph – anything; the inspiration is yours. Stay for one or several nights. Contact leader for further information and to book a place.

Day visitors welcome.

Leader: Adrienne Nicholson

Contact: 6281 6381



**20 May Sunday walk
Gudgenby Valley**

Depart 8.30 am from Lanyon Marketplace, Conder (off Tharwa Drive, near McDonald's). Drive via Old Boboyan Road and park at entrance gate to Gudgenby Cottage (aka Readycut). Climb hill east of road to treeline and follow Hospital Creek south before crossing it and heading to Forestry Hut for morning tea. Follow Yankee Hat walking track to base of mountain before turning north and crossing plain to Middle Creek. Climb hill to north for lunch. Return to car via Gudgenby Homestead and Cottage. Great views, lovely trees. 12 km. Afternoon tea at Coffee Guru, Lanyon Marketplace.

Drive: 75 km, \$30 per car.

Maps: Rendezvous Creek, Yaouk 1:25,000; Rooftop's *Namadgi Map*

Grading: 2 A/B/C

Leader: Brian Slee

Contact: 6281 0719 (h) or

brianslee@primus.com.au

**23 May Wednesday walk
Joint NPA / BBC / CBC activity**

Details are emailed to those on the Wednesday walks email list. Otherwise contact the leader.

Leader: Barrie R

Contact: 0437 023 140

**26 May Saturday work party
Planting – Point Hut area**

This is a new site for the NPA. The objective is to plant shrubs on the western bank of the Murrumbidgee in the vicinity of Point Hut Reserve. Tools will be provided but suggest you bring gloves if you have favourite ones. Meet at Kambah Village at 8:30 am.

Drive: 22 km, \$9 per car.

Leader: Martin Chalk

Contact: 0411 161 056



NPA outings program March – June 2018 (page 4 of 4)

Week starting 14 or 28 May Mid-week 3-day work party at Dananbilla

Contact: Martin Chalk on 0411 161 056 for details and arrangements.



30 May Wednesday walk Joint NPA / BBC / CBC activity

Details are emailed to those on the Wednesday walks email list. Otherwise contact the leader.

Leader: Steven Forst
Contact: 0428 195 236 or steven.forst@iinet.net.au

3 June Sunday walk Rob Roy Reserve

From the ACTEW substation south of Theodore we will follow track/fire trail to Callaghan Hill (200 m climb) then continue to Mount Rob Roy (about another 250 m climb after dropping a bit). Off-track short cut down hill, and maybe, depending on time and party, a side trip to Rose Trig, then on to Big Monks Trig and down to back of suburban Banks before road and off-track walk back to start. Longish 13+ km walk (excluding 2 km side trip) but mostly on track or road. Good views from the high

points. Meet at Kambah Village Shops 8:30 am.

Drive: 25 km, \$10 per car.

Map: Tuggeranong 1:25,000

Grading: 2 A/B

Leader: Mike S

Contact: 0412 179 907

9 June Saturday work party Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group

Meet at the Namadgi Visitor Centre, Tharwa at 9:15 am. Car pool to Gudgenby Valley. Blackberry and Briar spraying and Hawthorn removal along Middle Creek south of Gudgenby Cottage. Tools provided.

Leader: Kevin McCue

Contact: 6251 1291 or

mccue.kevin@gmail.com

9–11 June Pack walk The Vines

A walk in Morton National Park mainly on fire trail from the Nerriga entrance. A two-night camp in the forest clearing at the former site of Piercys Cabin in The Vines area between Quiltys Mountain and Galbraith Plateau. The second day we will visit the Bora Ground on Quiltys Mountain and Hidden Valley before returning to the camp site. Walk out on the third day. Contact leader early for details.

Drive: 256 km, \$102 per car.

Map: CMW Northern Budawang Range,

Endrick 1:25,000

Grading: 2 A/B/E

Leader: Steven Forst

Contact: 0428 195 236 or

steven.forst@iinet.net.au

17 June Sunday walk Lake Burley Griffin – Eastern Circuit

Meet at National Carillon car park at 9:30 am. Follow path east under Kings Avenue Bridge and proceed via ACT Hospice and Molonglo River to Jerrabomberra Wetlands. Sit-down lunch at Kingston Foreshore. Return to Carillon via Kings Avenue Bridge. There will be time to linger at the wetlands and the new developments in the foreshore area.

Map: Canberra street directory; Barrow's *Walking Canberra*, Walks 60–63.

Grading: 1 A

Leader: Brian Slee

Contact: 6281 0719 (h) or

brianslee@iprimus.com.au

23 June Saturday work party Fence removal – Gudgenby Valley

This will be the first fence removal work party at Gudgenby this year. We will concentrate on the fence line to the north-west of the valley that runs towards the site of Rowleys Hut. All tools will be provided. Meet at Kambah Village Shops at 8:00 am.

Drive: 80 km, \$32 per car.

Leader: Martin Chalk

Contact: 0411 161 056



Park managers everywhere face similar sorts of problems. Sign in Jiuzhaigou National Park, Sichuan Province, south-western China. Photo by Ed Highley.

Book review

Seeing Through Snow

a novel by Matthew Higgins
Ginninderra Press, Port Adelaide
2017 158 pp.

Matthew Higgins' first novel tells the story of Les Leong who grew up in Kiandra in Australia's High Country.

In the big blizzard of 1891, infant Les is abandoned on the doorstep of Sam and Edie Leong who adopt and raise him, along with four other children. Les's adopted parents (he never learns the identities of his biological parents and isn't interested in finding out) run the local store in the village which, typical of stores in small isolated country towns, sells just about everything and serves, according to Les, as Kiandra's gossip factory. The book recounts in a series of anecdotes Les's life in Kiandra and the local region, paralleling his development with that of the town.

His experiences growing up in Kiandra, his friendships and scrapes, as well as the characters who influence his childhood and his varied working life are recounted. So too are some of the significant events in the history of Kiandra, including the annual snowshoe (aka. ski) races and the arrival in 1915 of the motor car.

Les has a multitude of jobs. He does a stint at the local police station cleaning out the holding cells, which seems to



endear him somewhat to the inmates. At other times he works as a goldminer (including with a dredging operation on the Gungarlin River), in a sawmill, and running sheep and cattle on snow leases. He goes to Sydney to buy provisions for the general store and to catch up with his sister but loses out gambling and returns to Kiandra with a debt to pay off. When the work becomes too much for his parents, Les runs the general store. After the store shuts down he gets a job on the new Snowy Mountains hydro scheme.

Les's childhood and most of the jobs

he holds bring him into contact with the Bush of Australia's High Country. He also spends time with an Aboriginal community on the south coast. From these experiences, as well as from his adopted heritage, he develops an appreciation, love of and 'spiritual' connection with the Bush, and a deep concern about its degradation.

While the book is Les's story it's also the story of Old Kiandra. The town flourishes after 1860 during the gold rush. It's hard to believe that a century ago, as well as a general store and pub, there was a school and police station at Kiandra. We're told of the town's decline and brief resurgence during the depression, as people without jobs turn to gold panning as a way of making money, then steady decline again after the 1940s to its eventual dismantling in the 1970s by the Park Service.

Seeing Through Snow is an enjoyable read and provides food for thought on at least two counts. It recounts an important part of our local history – the rise and fall of a gold rush town. Through Les, it's also a clever way of drawing attention to concerns for the future of the Australian High Country.

Philip Gatenby

Another book by Matthew Higgins soon to be launched

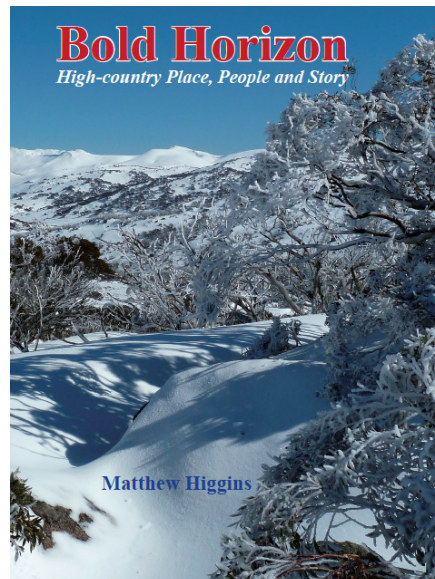
Bold Horizon

High-country Place, People and Story

by Matthew Higgins

Rosenberg Publishing Pty Ltd, 2018

Matthew Higgins traces his decades-long mountain experience in the alps as a bushwalker, cross-country skier, historian and oral-history interviewer. Then, mostly through interviews, Matthew profiles a range of people who have worked, lived or played in the mountains: stockmen, skiers, Indigenous parks officers, rangers, brumby runners, foresters, authors, tourism operators and others. Central themes of place, people and story are interwoven with concerns about environmental impact and climate change. Beautiful images help to tell the magnificent mountain story, from Kosciuszko to Kiandra, Brindabella to Bimberi and Bogong, to Tidbinbilla and beyond.



Matthew has worked at some of the leading national cultural institutions in Canberra and written books and articles, while regularly speaking about Australia's Alps to a range of audiences.

The top 150 km – hiking and paddling the Upper Murray River

In 2013 I hiked from the Murray Source to Bringenbrong Bridge near Corryong, generally following the river, to complement my earlier paddling journeys down the river downstream of Bringenbrong Bridge near Corryong, as described in the December 2013 NPA *Bulletin*¹. This included an arduous 8-day walk from the Source to Tom Groggin, which was also described in detail in *Wild*² in 2015. However, during these walks I was often a kilometre or more away from the river and missed seeing how its character changed along the way.

Challenges

According to Murray–Darling Journeys³, paddling journeys on the Murray River upstream of Tom Groggin are rare. The common theme of the few accounts available is that upon launching at the highest navigable point at The Poplars camping area, about 60 km upstream of Tom Groggin, lilos or rafts often needed to be dragged through the cold, shallow water and over log jams down the river bordered by near impenetrable scrub for the first couple of days. Downstream of Tom Groggin is the Murray Gates, which includes a series of grades 3 and 4 rapids as the river passes between mountains that tower 800 m above water level. This section requires a high level of whitewater paddling skill to negotiate. In the accounts available of journeys between the Murray Source and Bringenbrong Bridge, details are sometimes sketchy; some did not hike closely along the river between the Source and The Poplars, and some resorted to motorised craft somewhere downstream of the Murray Gates.

7–11 day prospect

In early 2017, Richard Swain (Swainy) of Alpine River Adventures⁴ advertised that he was wanting to conduct a recce for a hiking/kayaking trip for the top 150 km of the Murray River from the Source to Bringenbrong Bridge and was looking for ‘fit intrepid adventurers’ to join him. Swainy is a very experienced whitewater guide and has been through the Murray Gates countless times over several decades. The trip was set to start on 12 December and expected to take anywhere between 7 and 11 days. The party included guides Swainy and Kristian Cargill (Kribba) and whitewater novices Matty Hunter and myself. For Matty it was the start of his source-to-sea

journey. He is raising money⁵ for the Secret Creek Wildlife Sanctuary near Lithgow and is due to reach the sea in early March 2018. For me it was an opportunity to paddle the Murray River from the highest navigable point at The Poplars camping area down through the Murray Gates to Bringenbrong Bridge to add to the 2,400

km that I had already paddled over the past 22 years. Swainy and Kribba were going to have a big job getting Matty and me up to speed to handle the Murray Gates. But first of all we needed to hike for 2 days from the Murray Source to The Poplars following the river closely all the way.

Murray Source to The Poplars

Matty and Swainy had organised a helicopter drop off at Cowombat Flat. Day 1 started with the flight from Jindabyne that was spectacular on a clear day. As we approached the Flat, in addition to scaring some brumbies, we saw four hikers walking off to the west. After landing, we left our packs at the Flat and headed upstream where we found the pole marking the Murray Source (S36.79704° E148.19676°), signed the notebook and then headed up Forest Hill to Cairn No. 1 (S36.79887° E148.20128°) of the Black–Allan Line (the straight part of the NSW/Vic. border). We retraced our steps to the pole and followed the trickle that was the Murray River downhill to Cowombat Flat. We visited the exclosures which demonstrate how well vegetation grows when feral animals are excluded from an area, and visited the wreckage of a DC3 that crashed on the Flat in the 1950s. After lunch we walked for about 3 hours down along the Murray, crossing many times and sometimes walking in the river and made camp at 5:30 pm about 9 km downstream of the Murray Source.

Day 2 continued much the same as day 1 finished, with much river walking and frequent crossings. Occasionally we went high to avoid cliffs but at all times we were within a stone’s throw of the



The group at the pole marking the source of the Murray River. Day 1 of the trip. Photo by Mike Bremers.

river. We had afternoon tea at the Limestone Creek confluence, which is a major tributary of the Murray. Another hour or so of river and bank walking had us at The Poplars camping area at 4:30 pm where Joe and Justin (Matty’s mates and our support crew) were waiting with the inflatable kayaks and supplies. A most enjoyable evening was had by all and included a delicious roast pork and vegetable meal cooked by Joe. The only downside was stiff muscles and joints for us walkers every time we got out of our seats, legacy of a tough couple of days of walking 19 km down the river.

Chance encounter

At 10 am on day 3 we launched the inflatable kayaks. The water level was quite good after decent rain the previous week and we made steady progress. Occasionally Matty and I got stuck on rocks and sometimes we needed to disembark and pull our kayaks off. Swainy and Kribba didn’t seem to have the same problem – no doubt due to the ability to ‘read’ the river and their superior control of their kayaks. During the afternoon somewhere before Tin Mine Creek we came across the four hikers whom we had seen 2 days earlier at Cowombat Flat. They were about to cross the river when we paddled past. It was quite a coincidence as we would not have been able to see them if they were a few metres back due to the thick bush. They had walked from Dead Horse Gap to Cowombat Flat and were now headed for Tom Groggin along the river. Having done the walk in 2013, I felt sorry for them for the tough

(continued next page)

The top 150 km – hiking and paddling the Upper Murray River (continued)

conditions they were about to encounter. Later I wondered whether they had read about the walk in the 2015 *Wild* article.

This is the most beautiful part of the river, with tree ferns lining it in parts, but the most difficult to access. In 2013 I was quite certain I would never return, but here I was again! We were making much better progress than in those accounts of earlier paddling journeys, so we kept going until 6:30 pm to make the best of the conditions on a falling river. Campsites were difficult to find so after paddling 30 km for the day we made the best of a rocky beach and made some tent sites in the scrub. A Murray crayfish with its white claws and eggs was found in the water at our campsite and was returned to the river. That night I began to worry about the Murray Gates – I had not felt like I was in good control of the kayak during the day and the rapids were only going to get a lot bigger and more difficult downstream!

Tackling the Murray Gates

We again made good progress on day 4, clocking up 37 km. After Leatherbarrel Creek we began to encounter some grade 2–3 rapids and practised some drills. Matty and I survived these and our confidence grew. Further downstream, before the bridge to Tom Groggin Station, there is a waterfall with a drop of about 6 feet. Going over was fun but my enjoyment was tempered by the thought of the Murray Gates which we would pass through tomorrow. We arrived at our campsite at Grassy Flat at 5 pm. I was feeling a bit more confident about the Murray Gates than 24 hours previously and I slept better.

Swainy said Matty and I were doing well but the Murray Gates were another level up and we needed everything in our favour; i.e. lighter, more responsive craft, so Matt (Matty's mate) arrived early on day 5 to pick up our camping gear and transport it to our planned destination of Bunroy Creek camping area 27 km downstream. Kribba gave Matty and me a safety briefing including the use of the rope throw bag for rescuing capsized paddlers. You could not have found two more attentive students! I wondered how many times I would be rescued during the day. We launched at 9:30 am and I tried kneeling instead of sitting in the kayak. It felt good and the kayak definitely was more responsive with less cargo. The next few hours were a blur but we passed through numerous grade 3 and 4 rapids with names such as 'Head Banger', 'Sharks Tooth', 'Hole in the Head', 'South African Swim' and 'Guides Mistake'

(renamed 'Mike's Mistake' for the day). A couple of times we lined the kayaks down a rapid and there were a few scary moments, but Matty and I had enough skill to recover from these tricky situations. We stopped for lunch once we had passed all of the grade 3 and 4 rapids. The remainder of the way to Bunroy Creek was very enjoyable with relatively easy rapids and definite feel of a river going downhill. On arrival at Bunroy Creek camping area we were greeted by Matt and, a bit later Scotty (another one of Matty's mates), with lots of cold beers. For the second time in the day the next few hours were a blur but it is safe to say we were all satisfied with ourselves for getting safely through the Murray Gates.

Degraded farmland

After a few kilometres on day 6 we left Kosciuszko National Park and entered farmland. It was like another world with the sudden degradation of the banks. There were no native trees on the river bank at all, willows were hanging low over the river becoming a navigation hazard, in many places the banks had been trampled by the cattle; often the cattle were standing in the water and there were noisy pumps. Even in places where paddocks had been fenced along the river, we often saw cattle on the river side of the fence! Eventually we arrived at our destination of Indi Bridge Reserve after about 4 hours and 24 km. Matt and Scotty had more cold beers waiting, which were very welcome on a hot afternoon. Swainy's wife Alison also arrived in preparation to drive us home the next day and with more beer which is just as well because we no longer felt like drinking the river water untreated.

On day 7 it took only 2 hours to paddle the final 12 km to Bringenbrong Bridge. It was a narrow river with sharp bends and overhanging willows until we arrived at the Swampy Plains River confluence. There was a strong flow coming down the Swampy Plains and the Murray was significantly wider. The final few kilometres were covered



Walking the river, day 2 of the trip. Photo by Mike Bremers.

quickly, easily doing 8 km per hour. After lunch and packing up we said farewell to Matty as he launched for Towong and eventually the sea 2,400 km and two-and-a-half months away.

Achievement

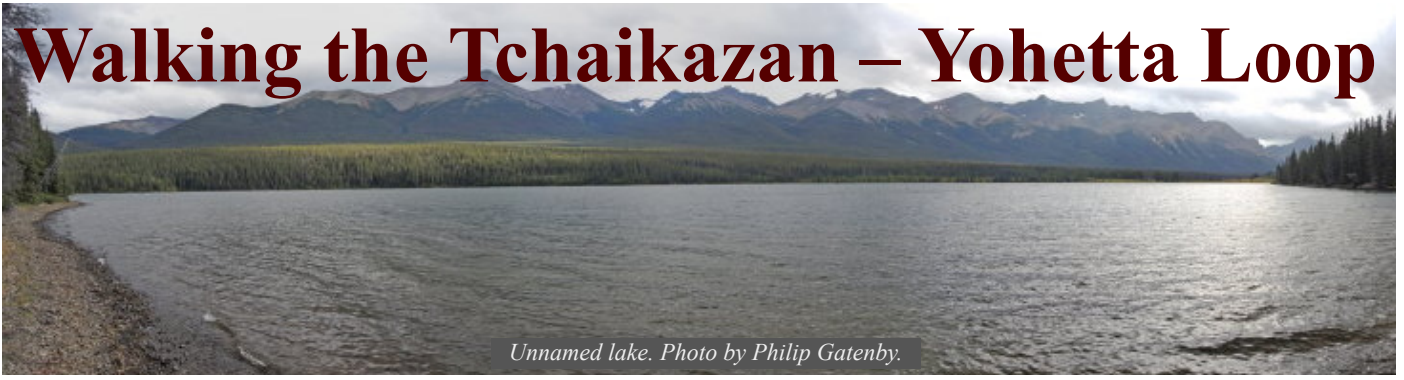
Overall it was a great feeling to have hiked and paddled the top 150 km of the river – a feat rarely accomplished. We had expert guidance in Swainy and Kribba and we had the right equipment for the task. We had good land support and we had luck on our side, the recent rain boosted the river level after a dry spring such that we made very good progress on days 3 and 4, which enabled Matty and me to get some practice on the rapids. The scary moments in the Murray Gates also had happy endings.

Mike Bremers

References/Footnotes:

1. NPA *Bulletin*, Vol. 50, No. 4, December 2013
2. *Wild*, Issue 146, March 2015
3. Bremers, Angela & Bremers, Mike, 2017, *Murray–Darling Journeys: Two hundred years of significant rowing and paddling journeys on the rivers of the Murray–Darling Basin: 1817 to 2016*, <http://www.vividpublishing.com.au/murraydarlingjourneys/>
4. Alpine River Adventures, <http://www.riverguide.com.au/>
5. Australian Ecosystems Foundation Inc., Everyday Hero, <https://give.everydayhero.com/au/m-a-t-e-s>

Walking the Tchaikazan – Yohetta Loop



Unnamed lake. Photo by Philip Gatenby.

In September 2016, Jan and I joined a group from the Canberra Bushwalking Club on a number of multi-day walks in the Pacific North-west of North America on a trip led by Linda Groom. One of the walks was in a very remote part of British Columbia. The location was chosen by Linda who thought that the area looked wonderful on Google Earth.

Mention Ts'il'os (pronounced 'sigh-loss') and even many Canadians look at you blankly, such is its remoteness. Ts'il'os Provincial Park, which was established in February 1994, protects 233,000 ha of wilderness in an isolated part of British Columbia, on the eastern side of the coastal mountains. It's roughly 250 km north of Vancouver and 160 km south-west of Williams Lake, the closest regional centre. The park is jointly managed by the provincial government of British Columbia (BC) and the Xeni Gwet'in First Nations Government. A central feature of the park is Chilko Lake, the largest high-level natural lake in Canada.

While information on the BC Parks website notes that 'back country hiking and camping ... is a cornerstone of the recreational opportunities offered by this remote park', the website also notes that tracks are not maintained. Trip reports of the Tchaikazan – Yohetta Loop, albeit

several years old, comment on the difficulty of keeping to the track largely due to the amount of treefall seemingly from wasp attack on the indigenous conifers. The track itself involves a walk upstream beside the Tchaikazan River, over Spectrum Pass and into the Chilko Lake catchment, then crossing the Yohetta Divide and down Yohetta Creek (see map).

Getting to the start of the walk was a bit of an adventure in itself. We flew by small plane from Vancouver to Williams Lake (our supply post) where we were met by the owners of the Elkin Creek Guest Ranch, our base for the walk. The ranch, located on the southern end of Vedan Lake and close to the park, was a 2.5 hour drive to the south-west, with a spectacular view of Mount Tatlow. Also known as Ts'il'os, this peak is spiritually significant to the Xeni Gwet'in. The night before the walk, in the context of our hosts' concern about us disappearing into the wilderness, we added 'bear bangers' (a cylindrical device that makes a noise like a gunshot and is fired into the air to scare a bear away) to our whistles and bear spray as a defence against possible encounters with grizzlies. We took some comfort from the fact that the salmon were running and the hope that all the grizzlies would

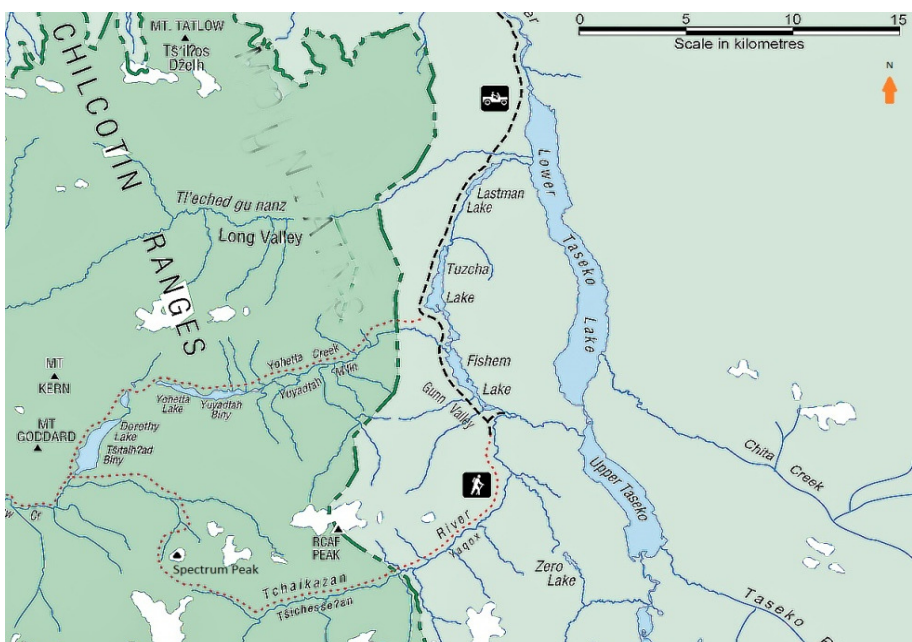
be preoccupied with fishing at the outlet of Chilko Lake about 40 km from where we were walking. Our hosts also mentioned the danger of cougars which it seems 'get you from behind'.

The drop-off point for the walk on the milky Tchaikazan River was over 3 hours drive from the ranch (and about an hour beyond the pick-up point on Yohetta Creek 6 days later) where the road, which had been deteriorating progressively, became impassable to vehicles. We walked upstream from the drop-off on a track which in places resembled a horse trail, in others a footpad and at times disappeared entirely. Our progress was accompanied by a cacophony of noise, mostly yelling and whistle blowing, to ward off any grizzlies that may have been in the area. Mid-afternoon we reached a hut. It was locked but showing signs of recent restoration. By now rain, which had threatened for much of the day, was steady. Pines offer reasonable shelter in wet weather so we pitched tents and dined in the shelter of trees, with due regard of the need in bear country to separate the bedroom and dining room by about 100 m. Food was either stored in bear barrels or hung from trees in bear-proof bags called Ursacks, the requisite distance above the ground and away from tents and dining area (a ritual repeated each night).

A fine morning ushered in spectacular views over river flats and not-so-distant mountains. To begin with, we climbed through pine forest then grassland, to Spectrum Pass, and explored here for a while. It's a desolate place, with bare earth, virtually devoid of vegetation and with rocky crags either side. Somewhat alarmingly a fresh set of large footprints was defined clearly in the soft surface of the pass, heading in the same direction as us. Just to the west of the pass is a relatively flat grassy area where we decided to camp.

Next morning most of the party climbed the ridge north of Spectrum Pass. Four of us then continued up Spectrum Peak (2,646 m). The weather began to deteriorate as we approached

(continued next page)



Walking the Tchaikazan – Yohetta Loop *(continued)*



*Camping at Spectrum Pass.
Photo by Jan Gatenby.*

the peak. From the top the view was spectacular, including nearby peaks, a large glacier to the south and Chilko Lake to the west. A snowstorm accompanied our return to camp, where we waited in our tents for it to pass then moved further down the valley, concerned at the likelihood of more bad weather. A few kilometres down the creek I was out in front and, rounding a small ridge, was confronted by three bears, grizzlies, two cubs and presumably their mother who stood up when she saw me. I retreated, with knees knocking. Fortunately, the bears took off in the opposite direction, probably because there were seven of us. Jan wanted to know why I didn't get a photo! From here we continued more cautiously and noisily, occasionally losing the track and admiring the abundant colours, shapes and sizes of the forest fungi. Towards day's end the track disappeared altogether among moist conifers and a plethora of animal pads.

Soon after our start on the fourth day there was a tricky crossing of a fast-flowing unnamed creek, after which we soon re-found the track and turned to the

west going down the valley towards Dorothy Lake. Spectrum Peak disappeared behind us. Approaching Rainbow Creek, the lake's outlet, the track again became indistinct. Eventually we found where it crossed the creek but crossing looked like it would involve a swim. It was hardly the weather for it. About 100 m upstream a tree had fallen over the creek and it provided a means of crossing. Unfortunately, the height of the tree was marginally less than the width of the creek. Still everyone got across, mostly dry. We soon again regained the elusive track which now turned to the north-east on the western edge of Dorothy Lake. There was no sign of a track to the south-west to Chilko Lake. Beside Dorothy Lake the track was hard to follow, in places disappearing beneath piles of treefall. Once the obstruction was either climbed under or over the track then had to be found again. That night our campsite overlooking the northern end of Dorothy Lake was spectacular and the weather cleared as we reclined around our camping stoves.

More showers in the morning and the track was again obstructed by

treefall, but once over the indistinct Yohetta Divide there were signs of recent work to clear the track, which now started to improve. We approached another cabin, also locked up but with a nice view over Yohetta Lake, an outside toilet and altogether larger and more elaborate than the hut we'd camped near at the end of day one. From here the track had been recently cleared. Less than an hour further along the lake we heard the unmistakable sound of a horse and soon arrived at another hut, described in track notes as a good place to camp. There was a woman at the hut, part of a group of local hunters who were there for a few days. She told us that we'd most likely see one of her companions, Tom, who had been track clearing, and his dog, Noon, as we headed east. Her other companions, a hunter and guide, were in the nearby hills after deer. Our progress along the now open track was swift and soon after lunch Noon, a husky-like dog, bounded up, seemingly delighted to see us. Tom wasn't far behind. Just as well we'd been forewarned as his appearance was formidable, almost threatening. He was on horseback and armed with a rifle and pruning saw (for cutting back conifer branches to allow horses easy access through the forest). After the exchange of pleasantries we thanked Tom for the track clearing, he told us about campsites ahead of us and asked about the condition of the track beside Dorothy Lake. Early afternoon, and now on a well-maintained track and less than 10 km from our pick-up point, we selected a campsite on an unnamed small lake to the east of Yohetta Lake. At about 7 pm, soon after we'd settled down for the night, the hunter and guide arrived. The guide was unhappy and said we'd scared the deer away with all the noise we'd made to ward off grizzlies. He became a bit friendlier, however, once we told him what we were doing and that we'd spoken with Tom.

Our last day in this remarkable area involved an easy walk on a good track to the Taseko River Road. We'd only just got to the road when our pick-up vehicles from the ranch were heard approaching. This was a relief as I'd not looked forward to a long wait in grizzly country.

Philip Gatenby

References

- Ts'il7os Provincial Park,
<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/tsilos/>
Map modified from:
Park Map, Ts'il7os Provincial Park,
http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/tsilos/tsilos_map.pdf?v=15165843343



*Tchaikazan River Valley.
Photo by Jan Gatenby.*

PARKWATCH

*News from state-based associations
and agencies.*

NPA welcomes Koala-ity Nature Reserve in Southern Highlands

The National Parks Association of NSW (NPA) welcomes an addition to our reserve system: a 402 ha nature reserve on the bank of the Wollondilly River in Canyonleigh. This new reserve is strategically placed between Blue Mountains and Morton National Parks. The acquisition was formed by the Southern Highlands Koala Conservation Project, a collaboration between Wingecarribee Shire Council, the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, and community volunteers and landholders.

The Southern Highlands Koala Conservation Project has been tracking koalas and mapping their habitat and feed trees since 2013 in response to devastating bushfires. They estimate that the Southern Highlands hosts a population of 3,000 koalas, approximately 10% of the state's population. While welcoming the announcement the NPA called on the government to finalise and release its Whole of Government Koala Strategy to protect koalas from logging, land clearing and urban development. As the Office of Environment and Heritage's website states: 'Koala populations are under increasing pressure and have declined in NSW by an estimated 26% over the past 15 to 21 years. Without active intervention, this level of decline is likely to continue ... and threats will be exacerbated by climate change'.

'Habitat protection is the most effective way to protect threatened species, like our Koala,' said NPA CEO Alix Goodwin. 'It is reaffirming to see that partnerships, like the Southern Highlands Koala Conservation Project, can put their research into action resulting in a gazettal of a new national park'.

NPA has been running 'Who's living on my land?' workshops with Wingecarribee Shire Council since 2015 to help private landholders discover, using infrared cameras, what species are on their property. 'Many landholders participating in our workshops have subsequently joined the council's Land for Wildlife program, adding hundreds of hectares of quality bushland to the Southern Highlands' conservation network,' said Ms Goodwin.

<https://npansw.org>
(22 December 2017)

Current threats to national parks in NSW

Over the past 60 years our NPA community of members and supporters has successfully influenced the establishment of most of the world-class national parks and protected areas in NSW, but today, very real threats to our national parks have emerged. These threats are being driven by the government's continuing pursuit of cost cutting and development above all else, and timber industry demands for access to national parks for logging.

- Murray Valley National Park – It took 30 years of persistent NPA campaigning to create the Murray Valley National Park. Today, the National Party is trying [to] turn it into state forest so it can be logged.
- Royal National Park – Earlier in 2017 we saw a proposal to put a motorway through Royal National Park. Overwhelming opposition from our community led to the NSW Government stepping back from this proposal. However, we can take this as only a reprieve.
- Greater Blue Mountains National Park – The government is proposing to raise the Warragamba dam wall by an unbelievable 14 metres to open more land for development. This puts the world heritage listed Greater Blue Mountains National Park and its wild river system at risk of inundation.
- Logging – Timber NSW is running a 'beyond tenure' campaign that seeks access to protected areas to shore up supplies by logging national parks.
- National Parks and Wildlife Service – Funding cuts are setting the National Parks and Wildlife Service up to fail in what appears to be part of a strategy to revert parks to state forests to better 'manage' them – but in whose interest?

NPA will continue to oppose these and any other threats to national parks in NSW through ongoing environmental advocacy and strong community action. Join us and together we will make sure national parks remain there for all of us and that the native wildlife within them survives and thrives.

<https://npansw.org>

No renewal of Regional Forest Agreements

Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) are twenty-year-long agreements between the Victorian and Commonwealth governments and provide special

treatment to the native forest industry. There are five RFAs in Victoria which start expiring from March 2018: East Gippsland (signed 3 February 1997), Central Highlands (signed 27 March 1998), North East (signed 9 August 1999), West Victoria – west of the Hume Highway to the South Australian border (signed 31 March 2000), and Gippsland (signed 31 March 2000). RFAs allow for the logging of public native forests. Logging that occurs under these agreements does not require approval under federal environmental laws, unlike most other industries or activities.

None of the Victorian RFAs has met its objectives. Numbers of forest-dependent species listed as threatened continue to rise, and forest health is declining and will only get worse under climate change. Even the native forest industry is stagnating and in decline as their main resource runs out or is reduced through landscape-scale fire.

Some reasons why Regional Forest Agreements have failed:

Obsolete and out of date – Many of the RFAs' standards for the protection of ecosystems fall below international and national benchmarks. The agreements do not even mention climate change and its potential impacts.

Threatened species and ecosystems – In 2015, Mountain Ash forest, one of the key target species for logging, was listed as critically endangered on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Ecosystems. The Leadbeater's Possum has been up-listed to critically endangered, and the Greater Glider added to federal and state lists as vulnerable to extinction. While the RFAs have been in effect in East Gippsland, populations of the Greater Glider have declined by 50 per cent in that region.

Ignore fire impacts – RFAs ignore the successive or cumulative impact of bushfire, even though there have been extensive fires in the past 10 years.

Ignore other forest values – They do not recognise, include or account for non-wood forest values (such as water, ecosystem services, recreation and tourism) that are contributing significant sums to the state's economy, and could contribute further.

Ignores their own previous reviews – Recommendations relating to improved threatened species outcomes, from the previous RFA five-yearly

(continued next page)

PARKWATCH *(continued)*

review in 2009, have still not been complied with.

Stifles innovation – The method of harvesting native forest, clear-fell logging, has not changed significantly in 30 years and has a dramatic impact on the native habitats and drinking water production. The amount of saw timber used in construction has dropped dramatically and supply is shaky, to the point that the Victorian Government had to buy out the main native hardwood sawmill in 2017.

The five Victorian RFAs must be allowed to expire, and not be extended or rolled over. Right now, there is a woefully overdue, legally mandated, five-yearly review of Victoria's five RFAs underway. The looming expiration of the RFAs provides a once-in-two-decades opportunity to put in place improved, modern and transparent arrangements for management of Victoria's publicly owned native state forests – based on current science, and on community views about how our state forests should be valued, used and managed.

This overdue five-yearly review should recommend the RFAs be abandoned and, at a minimum, end the special treatment this industry enjoys under the RFAs by:

- ending the regulatory relic which is the Western Regional Forest Agreement and comprehensively review proposed logging plans
- discontinuing the industry's exemption from national environment laws in all RFAs
- accounting for other forest-dependent industries – such as conservation recreation, tourism, agriculture, water, and carbon – in any arrangement or agreements going forward
- strengthening management prescriptions for threatened species, climate change impacts, and fire
- making substantial additions to the formal reserve system

<https://vnpa.org.au/category/News>,
15 December 2017

Victorian Government moves on invasive animals

The Victorian Government has accepted most of the recommendations of a parliamentary inquiry into the Control of Invasive Animals on Crown Land. In its response the government has committed to reducing the impact of deer on biodiversity in Victoria across all land tenures, using a range of management tools. The government will also seek federal funding for research into effective deer control methods.

'Current estimates for Victoria's feral deer population is around one million and they are having a considerable impact on many of our finest national parks, including rainforests, wetlands and alpine regions,' the Victorian National Parks Association's Phil Ingamells said. 'This is a very welcome response from the government.'

Importantly, the Victorian Government has acknowledged that recreational hunting is generally an ineffective means of invasive animal control. While it supports Parks Victoria's strategic control programs using skilled amateur shooters, the government says such programs should be in addition to funded programs using professional pest animal controllers.

In other key recommendations supported by the government:

- there will be complementary control programs between parks and private land
- amateur hunters will have access to meat processing facilities for personal consumption of deer
- feral cats will be declared pest animals on public land, allowing more effective control programs.

However, the Victorian Government, for public safety reasons, has not supported a recommendation to allow amateur hunters access to more powerful firearms and noise suppressors (silencers). 'These recommendations recognise the important role our land managers must play to halt the fast-growing threat of feral animals in our natural areas,' Mr Ingamells said. 'We can no longer pretend recreational hunting is the solution.'

<https://vnpa.org.au> Media release
15 December 2017

What's the plan?

National park management plans are noble in ambition, but they are short on commitment and lack a true landscape context, writes Phil Ingamells.

With the Victorian Government's new Biodiversity 2037 strategy in the starting blocks, it might be a good time to fix some national park management planning dilemmas.

While the strategy's four-year implementation plan is being developed, Parks Victoria might be in a position to put park management plans into a more usefully comprehensive planning framework. There's been a lot of talk about 'cross-tenure' or 'landscape-scale' planning over the last few years, a process that recognises that pest species, for example, don't recognise park boundaries. But national park, state

forest and any other public land plans (let alone agendas for private land) have no clear, overarching biodiversity management context in which to sit.

One significant problem with the current highly consultative national park planning process is that a park plan is generally the only process inviting public participation in a region. So, tourism developers, sporting shooters, trail bike or mountain bike enthusiasts, or anyone else wanting access to public land, is more or less invited to put pressure on Parks Victoria for access to the park or parks in question. If Parks Victoria's plans were truly landscape in scale (rather than simply planning for several parks in a broader landscape), decisions could be made to allocate activities incompatible with the conservation priorities of parks to suitable public or private land nearby. Or, even better, if we had overarching statewide or regional land management plans, park plans could fit into that framework, allowing their important minimal impact recreation priorities to proceed unchallenged. It's fair enough that people should have access to public land for many activities, but it's not very sensible if the only land for an activity is the land most valuable for the protection of nature. It might also be time to be clear about what a park plan should actually contain.

One of the inevitable effects of a steady reduction in park funding over the last decade or so has been the loss of experienced park managers. That situation has improved somewhat under the current state government, but building workable levels of expertise will take more time and money.

When the Alpine National Park was proclaimed in December 1989, five experienced staff, all with a good knowledge of the park, could be spared from their duties to draft the management plan. A comprehensive four volume plan emerged by September 1992, firmly establishing a management regime designed to put the much-abused alpine landscape on the path to recovery. In 2008, when a revised alpine plan was initiated, the availability of expertise was greatly reduced. Even though four more national parks, the Avon Wilderness and several historic areas had been added to the Alpine National Park's planning area, not one experienced park manager could be spared to take on the job. The process inevitably struggled until a much depleted plan appeared 8 years later, towards the end of 2016.

In recent years a series of native title

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PARKWATCH (continued)

determinations have been made, and others will appear in the near future. They require national parks within the areas determined under Victoria's *Traditional Owner Settlement Act*, or a federal determination, to be jointly managed between the Traditional Owners and the Victorian Government. The Act establishes various rights of access to Country, and other cultural rights, but the overall objectives of the *National Parks Act* remain, including the obligation for a plan.

In practice, the Traditional Owner organisations develop a draft in consultation with the government, which then goes to the public for consultation. This could well be the breath of fresh air our parks need. Gippsland's draft Gunaikurnai and Victorian Government Joint Management Plan is the most recent. It demonstrates, once more, the considerable contribution Indigenous voices can bring to park management. Hopefully, future plans will also give park managers the clarity and clear direction required to ensure our natural heritage survives and thrives for the benefit of future generations.

<https://vnpa.org.au/category/News>,
15 December 2017

Drones in Kosciuszko

Drones are more formally known as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) or unmanned aircraft systems (UASes). With the rapid increase in the number of people using drones it is important to understand the responsibilities that come with their use. Australia's Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) classifies drones as aircraft and therefore, in accordance with the Kosciuszko National Park Plan of Management, they can only be operated in the park for commercial and management purposes. Recreational drone use is restricted for reasons of safety, operational risk and to minimise disturbance to other visitors.

For further information contact the Resorts Environmental Liaison Officer on 02 6450 5616 or refer to the NPWS drones in parks policy

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/parks-reserves-and-protectedareas/park-policies/drones-in-parks>.

Resort Round-up Newsletter,
Issue 37 (Winter 2017)

Environmental performance report

The NSW Alpine Resorts Environmental Performance Report 2014–16 is now available for download on the OEHS website, at

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/alpineresorts/NSWARER.htm>

The report summarises the efforts of alpine resort operators to manage their environmental impacts while providing sustainable tourism destinations.

Resort Round-up Newsletter,
Issue 37 (Winter 2017)

Endangered New Holland Mice disappear from Great Otway National Park

A species of native mouse has disappeared from the Great Otway National Park, sparking fears for its survival in Victoria. Populations of the New Holland Mouse had been recorded at 42 sites in the eastern part of the national park, south-west of Melbourne, up until 2003.

A team led by Associate Professor Barbara Wilson from Deakin University revisited the sites to record numbers for a new study published in the journal *Australian Mammalogy*. 'In a very worrying surprise, we were unable to find a single mouse', Dr Wilson said.

ABC Radio Melbourne,
23 December 2017

Western NSW arid and semi-arid mysteries

Arid and semi-arid environments are very harsh, with low rainfall that occurs sporadically. Plants have evolved to cope with these conditions in a variety of ways. Many animals cope by adopting a more nocturnal lifestyle, particularly during the summer months. Night time and just after seasonal rain are the best times to view the flora and fauna of the desert.

There are a number of land management issues in arid and semi-arid lands. Grazing by sheep and cattle, and high populations of feral species such as rabbits, horses, camels and especially goats, have a heavy impact on the landscape. While there are some economic benefits, they devastate the landscape by over-grazing native plants, compacting the soil and causing erosion, and out-competing native animals for food and shelter. Weeds and non-native pasture plants out-compete native grasses and alter the vegetation systems.

Travelling Stock Reserves represent one of the prime opportunities for conservation of native habitats. In western NSW TSRs intersect or abut a number of existing protected areas, including Sturt NP, Mungo NP, Nochholeche NR, Yathong NR and Cocoparra NP and NR. Corridors such as TSRs are the best opportunity for

connectivity between protected areas, enabling species movement and migration along continuous habitat areas.

Nature NSW, Vol. 61, No. 4
(Summer 2017)

Gardens of Stone – the other Blue Mountains

The Gardens of Stone is a wonderland. Only 2 hours from Sydney, its accessible but unprotected public forests are found on the western edge of the Blue Mountains above Lithgow, adjoining the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

Photographers, bushwalkers and naturalists strive to capture, understand and explore its rare wildflowers, threatened wildlife, nationally endangered highland swamps and complex landscapes of ancient stone pinnacles, called pagodas. For generations these spectacular and constantly changing sandstone landscapes have been proposed for reservation.

Yet the Gardens of Stones remains under threat. Its cliffs and pagodas have fallen: its swamps are drying out; its creeks have stopped flowing or brim with toxic mine water – all caused by excessive longwall coal mining. A 39,000 hectare Garden of Stone Reserve proposal seeks to stop this damage. The alliance will fight for pure drinking water. It will seek to overturn the NSW Government's new laws that allow the Springvale mine to continue polluting Sydney's water catchment. Requiring the residents of Lithgow to drink treated water is not a solution.

Lithgow's coal industry will be gone in 20 years. A transition policy is urgently needed. A Gardens of Stone Reserve will not throw coal workers onto the scrap heap, but facilitate the transition to a healthier and diversified tourist economy. With protection of its outstanding heritage values, Lithgow has a bright and happy future. A big, new, Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area is not a hard thing to do when much of the area is currently public forests. It will permit responsible underground coal mining that protects outstanding heritage values and water resources.

Nature NSW, Vol. 61, No. 4
(Summer 2017)

Tasmanian wilderness update

Normally, no news is good news, but in this case it's because all deliberations on proposed developments are being conducted behind closed doors, thanks to

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PARKWATCH (continued)

the Tasmanian Government's secretive Expression of Interest (EoI) process.

The 1999 Management Plan for the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area left no doubt about the importance of wilderness. The 1999 plan also contained requirements for the protection of wilderness that proved adequate to prevent major developments during the lifetime of the plan. The 2014 draft management plan omitted any mention of wilderness. This was greeted with public outrage which resulted in the 2016 (final) management plan containing some encouraging statements about wilderness values. However, the plan contains no requirements to consider the impact of new developments on wilderness quality, although it does continue the 1999 plan's ban on new visitor accommodation in the wilderness zone.

But, compared to the 1999 plan the 'recreation' or 'self-reliant' recreation zone has been extended into the former wilderness zone to facilitate three specific proposals:

- Lake Rodway Commercial Hut (adjacent to Cradle Mt) – the Tasmanian Walking Company which operates the commercial huts on the Overland Track proposes a new hut at Lake Rodway so that it can offer a shorter alternative to the full Overland Track experience. There is little doubt that this proposal would place additional pressure on an already heavily used area.
- Cradle Canyons – a proposal for heli-canyoning commencing on a tributary of the Hartnett River adjacent to Waterfall Valley on the Overland Track. The helicopter flights would be a major intrusion into the wilderness experience of walkers on the track.
- Lake Malbena (south-eastern Central Plateau) – a proposal to refurbish an old privately owned hut for use as a

small, exclusive lodge for fly fishermen. Access to be by floatplane from Lake St Clair.

The other proposal of great concern for its impact on wilderness is the proposal for commercial huts on the South Coast Track. This track is substantially longer and harder than any existing hut-based commercial walking operation in Tasmania, so demand for such a walk is unlikely to be great, and the track itself would require expensive upgrades to make it suitable for commercial walking operations. The sensible outcome would be to abandon the proposal, but the biggest risk is that it morphs into something with even greater impacts such as a wilderness lodge at New River, with clients walking out over the easier half of the track to Cackle Creek.

The EoI process provides no opportunity for public comment unless a management plan change is required. It is also possible for proposals to evolve into something substantially different during the 'assessment'. For example, the Project Point Adventure started off as a proposal to helicopter walkers into the remote Gallagher Plateau (south-west of Mount Anne) followed by a walk down to the Huon River and raft out. In the approved proposal, the landing site changed to forestry land on the periphery of the WHA. An improvement!

Colong Bulletin, No. 269
(December 2017)

SA Environment, Resources & Development Committee (ERDC) Biodiversity Report released

The report from the 2015 ERDC Biodiversity Inquiry was finally released in March this year [2017]. This Parliamentary Inquiry examined the current regulatory and policy framework

in South Australia to determine whether it appropriately supports ecological processes and abates species extinction. A wide range of issues were considered through the Inquiry including the existing status of native vegetation and key biodiversity indicators along with current and emerging threats.

Not surprisingly, the ERDC concluded that in spite of the efforts of the State and Federal governments, industry and private landholders in South Australia, the condition of biodiversity in the State continues to decline. Species extinctions have occurred in the past and a further "extinction debt" still exists.

Several key themes emerged from the Inquiry including the following:

- Biodiversity conservation needs to be everyone's responsibility – State and Federal government, industry, the broader community, and private landholders.
- Biodiversity conservation needs to occur across both public and private land, with actions coordinated at a landscape scale.
- A range of measures [is] required to address the decline in biodiversity including legislative reform and improved management of threats.

The report was tabled in Parliament in March and though a response on key recommendations was expected from Minister Hunter by the end of July, he has not yet responded regarding whether and how the key recommendations in the report will be taken forward.

The full report is accessible on the ERDC Website under Completed Inquiries (Number 78):
<https://www.parliament.sa.gov.au/Committees/Pages/Committees.aspx?CTId=5&CIId=174>

Xanthopus Winter-Spring 2017
Volume 35 : Part 2/3

Compiled by Hazel Rath

News

Wineglass Bay Track

One of Tasmania's most iconic tourism experiences, the Wineglass Bay Track, has been re-opened after a \$500,000 upgrade initiated through the State Government's Tourism Infrastructure in Parks Fund. The track was reconstructed with improved step levels for visitor comfort and safety as part of the Tasmania Government's \$8 million commitment over the next two years to upgrade park infrastructure.

Further information:

http://www.premier.tas.gov.au/releases/wineglass_bay_track_upgrade_complete

A cure for Chytridiomycosis?

The deadly infectious disease Chytridiomycosis is caused by the chytrid fungus and blamed for wiping out more than a third of the world's frog species. This fungus spreads infection by releasing small bodies known as 'zoospores' that get into the skin of frogs, disrupting the flow of electrolytes; eventually leading to a heart attack.

University of Newcastle ecologist Simon Clulow said they focused their study on 'one species we're particularly fond of that occurs in our area, that's suffered dramatic declines by 90 per cent – the Green and Golden Bell Frog.

Chytrid fungus has devastated the

frog's numbers across Australia, but there is hope to repopulate the species. And the solution is a simple one: 'We use pool salt ... It's predominantly sodium chloride, which is your most common salt... The study established that by elevating salt levels very slightly, we're still talking fresh water that you could drink, we can block the disease and lower the transmission rate...[the frog] had a 70 per cent increased survival rate when translocated into habitats where small amounts of salt were added to the water,' he said.

ABC News: Colin Kerr

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-02-05/two-green-and-golden-bell-frogs/9395576>

NPA notices



National Parks Association Calendar

	March	April	May	June
Public holidays	Mon 12, Fri 30–Sat 31	Sun 1–Mon 2, Wed 25	Mon 28	Mon 11
General meetings	Thurs 15	Thurs 19	Thurs 17	Thurs 21
Committee meetings	Tues 6	Tues 3	Tues 1	Tues 5
Gudgeny Bush Regeneration ¹	Sat 10	Sat 14	Sat 12	Sat 9
Art Week at Gudgenby Cottage ²	—	—	Fri 18–Fri 25	—

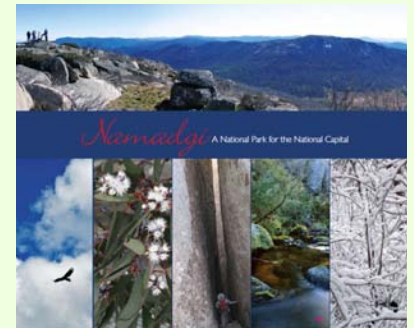
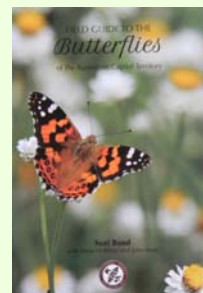
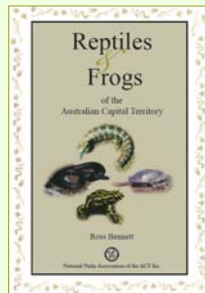
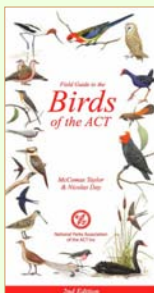
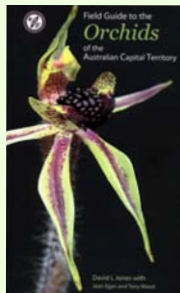
Further details: 1. GBRG. Meet at Namadgi Visitor Centre 9.15 am.
2. See notice on page 15, Outings Program.

The NPA welcomes

Margaret Strong
who has rejoined the
association.
We look forward to seeing you
at NPA activities.

This *Bulletin* was prepared by:
Editor, Kevin McCue
Copyeditor, Ed Highley
Presentation, Adrienne Nicholson.

NPA books available from some bookshops (eg ANBG), or contact the association office.



Life membership of NPA ACT

The committee is again calling for nominations for Honorary Life Membership. If you know a member who has done something very special for our association and is worthy of this recognition, please send a confidential nomination to the secretary Sonja Lenz by mid-April (signed by yourself and another member who seconds the nomination). Further information on what to put into the nomination can be found on the NPA website or by contacting Kevin McCue on 6251 1291 or email mccue.kevin@gmail.com

Call for volunteers

At NPA general meetings volunteer members set up the hall and the supper. We need more volunteers for 2018 as the roster is by no means full. Please contact Quentin Moran if you can help. qmoran@webone.com.au
Thank you.



Contributions for the NPA Bulletin

Contributions of articles, letters, poems, drawings and photographs are always welcome. If possible keep contributions to no more than 1,000 words. 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, email admin@npaact.org.au, or to the NPA ACT postal address (see page 27).

**Deadline for the June 2018 issue:
30 April 2018.**

Cover photographs

Front cover

Main photo. Project leader Don Fletcher with a captured Rosenberg's Monitor (article page 6). Photo by Kevin McCue.

Insets. Top. President Esther Gallant addresses members at the 2017 Christmas Party at Gudgenby Cottage. Photo by Max Lawrence.

Centre. Fireweed at Spectrum Pass, British Columbia (article page 20). Photo by Philip Gatenby.

Bottom. King Penguin, Macquarie Island (article page 11). Photo by Doug Brown.

Back cover

Top. Paddling in the Tin Mine Creek area (article page 18). Photo by Mike Bremers.

Bottom. Grass Tree (left) and Koala (right), Stipiturus Conservation Park, Fleurieu Peninsula, SA (article page 5). Photos by Kevin McCue.

General Meetings

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



Thursday 15 March

Hammered by hooves

Di Thompson

The Alpine (Vic) and Kosciuszko National Parks continue to be beaten by the impacts of the hooves and eating habits of introduced animals – horses, deer, pigs, etc. Recently a few NPA members revisited the source of the Murray River and Cowombat Flat. Unfortunately, the areas visited have deteriorated further, primarily from feral horses, since the ‘NPA Magnificent Nine’ visited some five years ago. What might the point of no return be? What is the cost? Where are the grasslands and our native mammals? Why are Namadgi’s ecosystems in such good health?

Thursday 19 April

Member forum

Preliminary discussion on plans for NPA’s 60th Anniversary in 2020.

We will summarise events undertaken for the 50th anniversary, such as the special *Bulletin* and a symposium, and call for ideas and volunteers for the 2020 celebration.

Thursday 17 May

From minute to magnificent: the development of a butterfly

Adrienne Nicholson

Some NPA members have become particularly observant of butterflies since the association published Suzi Bond’s ‘butterfly book’. Both Esther Gallant and Adrienne have closely followed the development of individuals from being laid as tiny eggs through to emergence as beautiful adult butterflies. Both Orchard Swallowtails and Dainty Swallowtails have been followed, but only one lemon tree has been sacrificed (so far)!

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.

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The NPA ACT office is in Unit 14 / 26 Lena Karmel Lodge, Barry Drive, Acton, together with the Conservation Council. It is staffed by volunteers on an irregular basis. Callers may leave phone or email messages at any time.

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www.facebook.com/NationalParksAssociationOfTheAct

Membership subscription rates (1 July to 30 June)

The subscription rate is \$22, which includes a **digital copy only** of our *Bulletin*.

If you want to receive a printed copy of the *Bulletin*, the subscription rates are:

Household membership	\$44	Single members	\$38.50
Corporate membership	\$33	Full-time student/Pensioner	\$22

Note: All the above subscription categories reduce to \$11 if a donation of \$100 or more is made.

Advertising

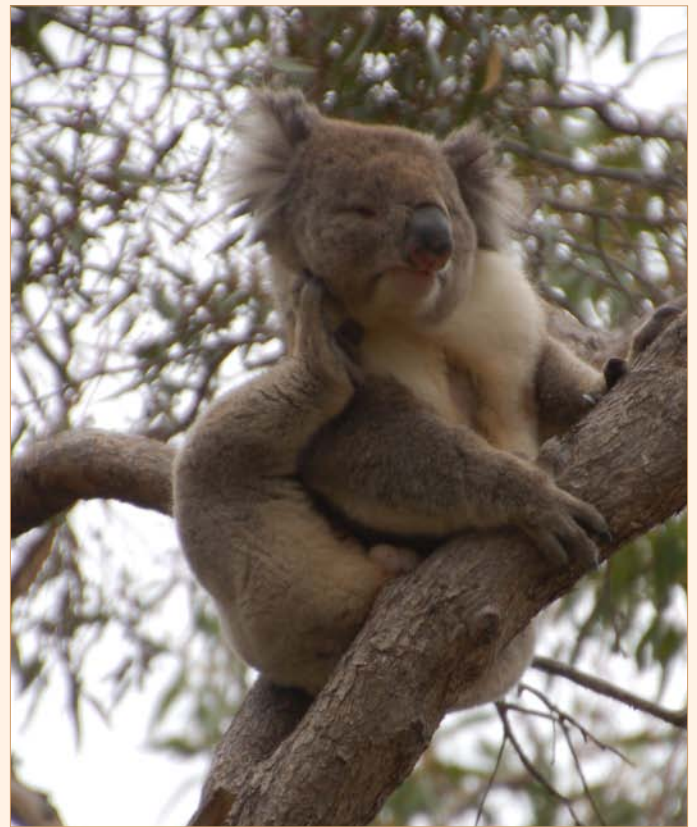
The *NPA Bulletin* accepts advertisements and inserts. Contact the NPA office for information and rates.

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NPA books are available from some bookshops (eg ANBG), or contact the association office.



For information on NPA ACT activities, please visit our website <http://www.npaact.org.au>
and follow us at www.facebook.com/NationalParksAssociationOfTheAct