



NPA *Bulletin*

Volume 56 Number 2 June 2019

National Parks Association of the Australian Capital Territory Inc.



Yerrabi butterfly walk



Narjong water healing



Members forum

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

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Notice of Annual General Meeting 2019

Thursday 15 August 2019

Business:

Minutes of AGM 2018

President's report

Financial report and appointment of auditor

Election of office-bearers and committee

Any other business.

Note: all office-bearer and committee positions become vacant at the Annual General Meeting.

Nominations for office-bearer and committee positions for the coming year are welcome. Please copy or scan the form below for submission of nominations.

Nominations for NPA ACT committee and office-bearers for 2019–20

Nominations are sought for committee members and office-bearers to be elected at the
Annual General Meeting on 15 August 2019.

We nominate..... **for the position of** **of the NPA ACT for 2019–20**

Proposed by(signature) Seconded by(signature)

I accept the nomination(signature) (date)

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

President's report



Recently, the committee has focused on plans for celebration of the 60th Anniversary of the founding of NPA ACT on 1 March 1960. The first event was the 60th Anniversary Members Forum (6 April) to identify where NPA ACT should focus in the years ahead in order to ensure the protection of our national parks and the uniquely Australian environment and cultural heritage contained within them. Keynote speakers and invited guests had lively and productive discussions of the way forward. (See article in this *Bulletin* summarising the suggestions.) The committee will discuss suggestions and ideas from the forum in the near future and solicit member input before deciding on a plan of action. Planning for other 60th Anniversary events is underway including a photography contest and anniversary dinner.

Our splendid new promotional brochure has been printed and those receiving a printed copy of the *Bulletin* will find one inside. Please consider giving this to a friend who might be enticed to join. Thank you to the Publicity Subcommittee members Allan Sharp (convener), Margaret Power and Michaela Popham for bringing this to completion, and to Sabine Friedrich for her stunning design. Now we need to distribute the brochure to as many locations as possible where they might reach prospective members. If you have any suggestions please contact me or Allan.

Astonishingly the 75th anniversary of the founding of Kosciuszko National Park on 19 April passed with no official

recognition from the NSW Government or NPWS. The park was created in response to the dreadful damage resulting from stock grazing in the High Country. Reclaim Kosci publicised this important anniversary and the irony of the same area now being severely damaged by feral horses and other hard-hoofed invasive species.

Reclaim Kosci commissioned Harrison Warne, an award-winning young nature photographer, to produce a short film *Underfrog* about the threat posed by feral horses. The premiere screening was at ANU on 11 May (see article in this *Bulletin*). Several of the best entrants in the 60-second video competition were also screened. All of these will be shown at the Namadgi Visitor Centre in the near future.

All involved in the Reclaim Kosci campaign have been pleased and encouraged by the interest shown by most people they have encountered and the continuing interest of the media. The creativity and enthusiasm of Alison and Richard Swain, campaign coordinators, has been key to our overall success. The petition to the NSW Parliament rapidly reached 10,000 signatures thanks to the apparently boundless enthusiasm of Linda Groom and her team of Canberra Bushwalking Club volunteers. They have criss-crossed NSW to talk with people about the feral horse problem. The number of petition signatures now well exceeds that required to obligate the NSW Parliament to re-debate the *Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Act 2018*. Well done ALL!

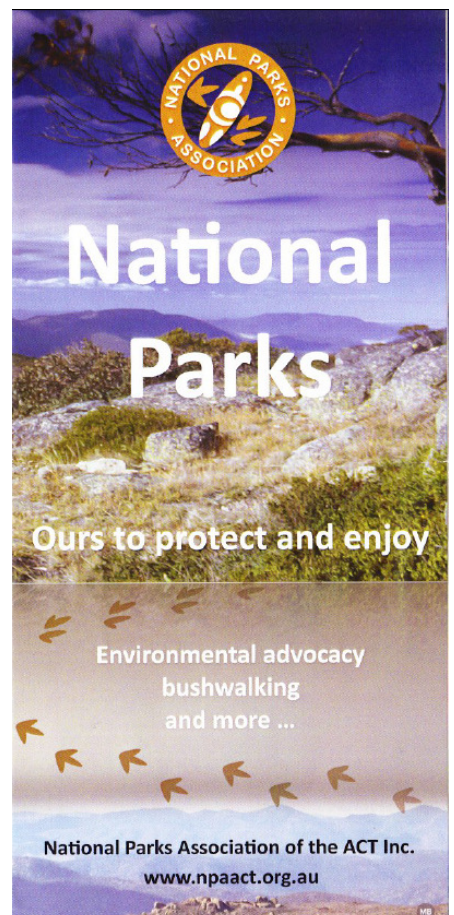
Closer to home, both Rod Griffiths and I have contacted Environment Minister Gentleman's office with regard to updating the ACT 2009 Plan of Management for feral horse control. Recently we have learned that the process has been initiated. Look out for a future call for comment on the new plan.

NPA's contributions to bushfire management through the recent bushfire symposium have obviously been recognised. ACT Parks representative Tony Scherl sought the opportunity to address NPA ACT to present the newly formulated ACT Bushfire Plan of Management for comment. We were happy to make a last minute program change to accommodate him in a timely manner and the session was well attended (see article in this *Bulletin*).

Our book and information stall at the ACT CAP (Connect and Participate) Expo was a great success both in number of books sold and the numerous conversations with very interested people. Thanks to Adrienne Nicholson, Sonja Lenz, Kevin McCue, Jane O'Donohue and Allan Sharp for their efforts on the day. We handed out lots of new brochures as well.

Our next information stall will be on 28 July at the Namadgi Visitor Centre observation of World Ranger Day. If you would like to help just contact a committee member. Do mark the day on your calendars and plan to attend the event to honour the work of all rangers worldwide, especially those who have a much more dangerous job than ours in Australia.

Esther Gallant



NPA information stall at ACT CAPEXpo. Photo by Esther Gallant.

Report on 60th Anniversary Members Forum

The theme of the forum, held on 6 April 2019, was 'Protecting our national parks for future generations'. The event was organised and facilitated by Cynthia Burton, NPA ACT Vice President, and held in the hall of St Margaret's Uniting Church in Hackett. Twenty-two NPA ACT members attended. They were joined by eight guests from like-minded organisations.

Much has happened in the world since the NPA ACT was first created in 1960. Many national parks, including Namadgi, currently face a multitude of daunting challenges to their environmental and cultural values – in some cases, even to their very existence. Challenges include poor land- and water-resource management, invasive animals and plants, and climate change.

The forum aimed to identify where and how NPA ACT should focus its energies in the years ahead to support the protection of our national parks, including Namadgi, and the uniquely Australian environmental and cultural heritage they hold. It also permitted the sharing of ideas and experiences with like-minded friends. The program comprised presentations by two invited speakers and a small-group brainstorming session to identify issues and develop aims for future activity.

Presentation: Namadgi and other Australian national parks: needs, opportunities and threats

Brett McNamara, Manager of Namadgi National Park, spoke about the changed context in which the caretakers of national parks work today. In years past, the roles of parks' staff were largely focused on looking after the flora and fauna. This focus has gradually changed to one of managing people, including park visitors and a range of other stakeholders, including politicians.

Brett described the approach currently being taken in Namadgi as 'the four pillars of people management':

1. Retaining a focus on natural values, i.e. the flora and fauna of the park
2. Promoting both Indigenous and European cultural heritage, e.g. Aboriginal rock art sites and sites associated with the 50th anniversary of the Apollo moon landing
3. Promoting engagement with nature as a means of creating healthier individuals, societies and communities – based on scientific evidence of these benefits
4. Building social licence within the community for actions essential to protecting the park.

Brett considered the fourth pillar to be particularly important to the future of national parks in Australia. Compared with 30 years ago, the average person does not get as much exposure to key environmental concepts and relationships, such as the linkages between feral horses, damage to sphagnum moss, and water supply. Environmental issues are not as visible in the media as in the past, and there is less understanding in the wider community of the relevance of national parks to their lives. Individuals are engaging with the natural landscape in new and different ways. For example, endurance events in the bush are rising in popularity, and a more demographically diverse population is now exploring nature.

Brett felt that there is a need for park agencies and organisations such as NPA ACT to build a narrative with the community about why nature is important, a narrative that is clear and easy to understand; he gave the example of the (widely well-received)

story on 'the life of a raindrop' that he wrote for the media. He expressed the view that activities such as taking politicians and the media on field visits play a valuable role in personalising and humanising the issues with this audience. He thought that there is further scope for NPA ACT to think creatively and work proactively with new and different groups of people, such as climate change groups, as well as to work towards strengthening the diversity of the organisation to reflect the wider community that now engages with the environment.

Group brainstorming

The task of the brainstorming session was to explore and recommend possible key aims and actions to move NPA ACT towards achieving its goal of protecting national parks for future generations. The results would be used to inform future NPA ACT decision-making.

The session was in two parts. In the first part, each group undertook a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis relating to the association as it currently stands. Major points raised in their analyses are given below. A full list is on the NPA ACT website at <https://www.npaact.org.au/res/File/2019/60th%20forum%20summary%20FINAL%20CB%2015%204%2019.pdf>.

The second part of the session discussed and drew on the findings of the SWOT, leading to the suggestion of the six primary aims for future activity listed in the box on page 5. A complete list of actions suggested to achieve these aims can be found on the website (at the link shown above).

Strengths of NPA ACT

- Extensive accumulated knowledge, good reputation, publication expertise, lobbying and activist experience and interesting projects
- Educated members, generous donors, good relationships with politicians and media.

Weaknesses

- Lack of diversity in membership with regard to age, culture, other forms of demographics as well as inactive and aging members
- Lack of modern communication skills, paid staff and a public spokesperson
- Perception of being too scientific, conservative and cliquy.



(continued next page)

Suggested aims of NPA ACT to achieve its goal of protecting national parks

- Increase membership base by broadening age range and increasing cultural diversity
- Review NPA ACT's scope and mission
- Develop a communication and outreach strategy to promote education and raise awareness of natural environment
- Make responsible use of national parks fun and engaging
- Promote a culture of climate readiness across planning and governance in ACT protected natural areas
- Add value to NPA-sponsored research by actively publicising it.

Opportunities

- Promote national parks as climate change buffers (i.e. help to be climate change ready) and as an aid to physical and mental health
- Contribute to strengthening of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and other environmental legislation
- Tap into diversity of park user groups and programs such as 'Nature Play'
- Increase effectiveness of online presence to promote our strengths and passions
- Develop collaborations with like-minded groups and the wider community.

Threats

- Commercialisation of national parks, i.e. potential damage and strains on capacity of the environment to cope
- Lack of custodianship culture and understanding of responsible recreation
- Time and career pressures on younger people who tend to have an issues focus – targeted campaigns are needed to engage them
- Climate change
- Increasing numbers and poor management of feral animals
- Population pressure leading to both over-use and urban encroachment into natural spaces.

Presentation: Reaching out to current and future generations: the experience of Intrepid Landcare

Megan Rowlett, assisted by her co-founder Naomi Edwards, outlined the origin and approach of Intrepid Landcare (IL). When Megan first joined a landcare group some years ago, she had a positive experience but also noticed that most people involved in landcare were older. She wanted to find a way to link older volunteers with younger people and share the multiple benefits of this volunteer work, including better health, connection with nature and making a contribution to protection and conservation of the environment.

IL was started around a decade ago and became a national organisation in 2015. IL applies the organisation's understanding of how young people connect and care for the environment with the experience of landcare groups and communities. IL did a multi-state survey of why young people engaged in landcare and found that the main barriers to volunteering were: lack of time; unawareness of opportunities; uncomfortableness with turning up to projects and not knowing anyone; other work/life commitments; perceptions of lack of welcome (mainly a reflection of the approach of organisations to extending the 'invitation'). The top three reasons young people stayed involved in volunteer landcare work were that they felt like they were making a difference to the local environment, they liked being in the 'great outdoors' and they had fun.

In the early days of IL's work, Megan discovered that she had to put considerable effort into breaking down negative attitudes and perceptions that older people held about younger people (e.g. unreliable, more interested in video games etc.). She further discovered that many young people lacked confidence in doing landcare work until they discovered others with shared values; did not have experience of some basic bush skills, which made them hesitant to get involved in outdoor environmental activities; wanted and needed opportunities to lead activities (projects) and to explore and connect with others and with nature. They wanted to feel valued and heard.

IL has run many outdoor weekends for young people aged 10–24. Young people are empowered with basic training to take on leadership

roles with the support of older people. Many have gone on to start their own groups, and there are now 14–15 IL networks around Australia. These are designed as safe and non-judgmental experiences. IL also run workshops and related activities to help organisations and communities build connections and relationships with younger people. There is a charge for the latter activities, the proceeds being used to subsidise outdoors-oriented youth leadership training.

Megan shared IL's top tips for engaging young people successfully. These focused on: identifying and mapping out the demographic group(s) with whom we want to engage; working out the networks, clubs and places they 'hang out', along with building up an understanding of their needs, wants and fears; challenging our assumptions about youth; being clear about what motivates us to do the work we do and being able to 'share our story' in an engaging manner (e.g. face-to-face, online, media); taking a personal approach to the invitation to join; and co-designing projects (activities) with these younger people.

Further details can be found in IL's workbook on *Tips and Ideas to Support Young People to Create Change*. Hard copies are available from Esther Gallant.

Summing up the forum

Convener Cynthia Burton thanked participants for their ideas and enthusiasm, which had led to the forum admirably achieving its aim. She acknowledged the contributions of Annette Smith and Deidre Shaw in planning and implementing the event, and especially thanked the invited guests for sharing their time and thoughts with NPA ACT.

**Esther Gallant,
based on Convener
Cynthia Burton's report**

Photos by Rod Griffiths.



Obituary: David Large

David Large died on 26 March after battling various forms of cancer for several years. He was nearly 82 and had been an active member of NPA ACT since he retired in 1993.

David was born in Mudgee, grew up in Wollongong and moved to Canberra to join the public service in 1959 after a short spell at Port Kembla steelworks. He had been a Queen's Scout as a boy and led a troop in Canberra. He served a brief National Service in the army catering corps.

David served on the NPA committee twice. However, his real love was bushwalking and the environment, not committee work.

David was a formidable bushwalker. He frequently led day and overnight walks for NPA and other Canberra bushwalking groups as well as participating in private walks. These included trips to Namadgi, the Snowy Mountains, Warrumbungles, Hume and Hovell track, Nadgee, Budawangs, Greet Ocean Road, and further afield to the Heyson Trail in SA and the Kimberley, Kakadu and Tasmania, including several to the challenging South West. He made a number of trips to New Zealand and a walking tour to Japan. He had a special love for the

Royal National Park near Sydney and often used this overnight walk as a training walk for longer expeditions.

In later years David became obsessed with the Bibbulmun Track in Western Australia and completed this 1,000 kilometre walk at least five times. He loved the order and routine walking the Bibbulmun Track could offer. As well, he revelled in being able to meet and talk with a new cohort of walkers most nights. David was known as something of a gear freak and spent a good amount of time researching the latest lightweight gear and places to visit. This benefitted many as he was always pleased to offer advice to those keen to do likewise.

David was always a stimulating walking companion. On many trips he brought along newspaper quizzes to entertain us in the evening. He was widely read and never afraid to engage in robust conversations. One friend has said of him 'Initially I found him a little forthright in manner but soon discovered his generous and kindly heart'. Once, in New Zealand we arrived at an isolated hut to find three walkers looking for a fourth to play bridge. David, a keen player, was pleased to be able to oblige!



David tramping in New Zealand.
Photo by Tim Walsh.

Although he rode a horse for pleasure when he first moved to Canberra, David was a passionate supporter of the Save Kosci protest movement against feral horses held in November–December last year. Despite his poor health and obvious deteriorating condition he was a key player in NPA ACT's contribution to the campaign. He drove support cars and on the last day joined the main body of participants who walked from Charlotte Pass to the summit of Mount Kosciuszko. He managed to get to Rawson's Pass. No mean feat.

David was lucky to be supported in his travel adventures by Robin, his patient and understanding wife.

Timothy Walsh

ACT premiere of *Underfrog*

On Saturday evening 11 May 2019 at the Australian National University, Reclaim Kosci and the ANU Environment Collective hosted the ACT premiere of the *Underfrog* documentary in a night about the feral horse issue in Kosciuszko National Park. The event was well attended.

Underfrog is a half-hour documentary by Harrison Warne, a recent ecology graduate. The documentary takes you on a journey to explore Kosciuszko, feral horses and their disturbance of these delicate ecosystems. In particular it focuses on

feral horse damage to the habitat of the Stocky Galaxias, a small native fish that has a very limited range in a creek of northern Kosciuszko, and Harrison's search for a Corroboree Frog. *Underfrog* is Harrison's second documentary. His first, a co-production with Jack Breedon, was *Life in the Wet: a Frogumentary* about the wet tropics region of north Queensland. Both of these documentaries can be viewed on Harrison's Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/Harrison-WarneWildlifePhotographyvideos/>.

After the screening there was an open panel discussion with Harrison, Professor Geoffrey Hope and Reclaim Kosci coordinator Richard Swain about the feral horse problem.

Also during the evening, Andrew Cox, CEO of the Invasive Species Council, presented a total of \$5,000 in prize money to the winner of the Reclaim Kosci short video competition. The

competition was supported by the Paddy Pallin Foundation. The winner of both the \$3,000 judge's choice and the \$2,000 people's choice was Brett Frawley with his video *That Warm Fuzzy Feeling!* The judge of the competition wrote 'Brett's piece achieved a very rare thing – he used just the right proportions of humour and honesty to offer up a very clear message ... Humour is gold in a hard campaign like this and Brett got the dose right. Lovely, original campaigning ... voiced by a Corroboree frog no less!' Brett's video and other entries to the video competition can be viewed on Reclaim Kosci's Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/ReclaimKosci/videos/>.

It was pleasing to see the work of both Harrison and Brett. They are talented videographers who each get their message across in a very effective and entertaining way using new technologies and social media.

Mike Bremers

Professor Geoffrey Hope, Harrison Warne, Richard Swain and Andrew Cox at the ACT Underfrog premiere. Photo by Mike Bremers.



Narjong water healing ceremony in Kosciuszko

A rare and inspiring event took place at Long Plain in Kosciuszko National Park on 3 March 2019. Organised by one of Reclaim Kosci's two campaign coordinators, Richard Swain, who is a Wiradjuri man, the Narjong water healing ceremony brought senior Indigenous lore men together at the source of the Murrumbidgee River to provide much-needed care for this vital element of country. The ceremony was apparently the first of its kind in 150 years.

The ceremony was led by Uncle Max Dulumunmun Harrison, and included men from across NSW and further afield; collectively, they represented the Murray, Murrumbidgee, Lachlan and Darling rivers. Uncle Major Moogy Summers, a Ngarrindjeri elder, came all the way from the Coorong in South Australia, at the mouth of the Murray



River. Author Bruce Pascoe (*Dark Emu*) was also among the participants.

The aim of the ceremony was to heal the river waters from the many influences that are harming it. Richard Swain is particularly concerned about the ever-increasing damage to country caused by a growing population of feral horses.

'We took people to the actual spring where the mother gives birth to the Murrumbidgee. It's been absolutely desecrated by feral horses ... It is really emotional, it is hard to comprehend. Water can't come out of the ground because it's been trampled.'¹

Well over 100 people attended the ceremony. Everyone walked a kilometre to the river. The lore men conducted ceremonial dancing, singing and firelighting. All in attendance were smoked, then the smoke was buried and the ochre washed in the river. There was even participation by representatives of a pro-feral-horse group.

I was among the several NPA ACT members privileged to experience this special, moving ceremony. We were inspired by this group of lore men who are committed to caring for country and

Passing through the smoke.
Photo by Cynthia Burton.



Guests walking down to the river. Photo by Cynthia Burton.

to standing up for it. Non-Indigenous Australians can learn much about the importance of responsible custodianship of the land from Australia's ancient cultures.

I encourage you to go to the link below to see some footage from the Narjong water healing ceremony. This short ABC South East NSW video has now been viewed well over 400,000 times – a significant social media achievement. Overall, the ceremony has received widespread media coverage.

<https://www.facebook.com/abcsoutheastnsw/videos/1235840133238955/?v=1235840133238955>

Cynthia Burton

¹ Rachel Knowles, 13 March 2019, 'Heritage, feral horses and meat pies; conversation starters at Narjong Healing Ceremony' in *National Indigenous Times*.

Environment Subcommittee update

The aims and objectives of the NPA ACT are given on page 31 of this *Bulletin*. The first of them involves the promotion of national parks and, just as importantly, the promotion of measures for the protection of the natural environment. The NPA ACT's Environment Subcommittee plays an important part in the achievement of this objective. In the period since the publication of the last *Bulletin* it has been particularly busy through its:

- Presentation of environment concerns to the ACT Legislative Assembly Environment Committee as part of the 'Nature in the City' public hearings. The NPA fielded questions from the assembly's Environment Committee and emphasised the need for long-term funding for weed and pest control; and the need for ACT-wide planning to reduce the pressure on the ACT's reserves by ever-increasing visitor numbers.

- Meeting with the representatives of Parks and Conservation and the Emergency Services Agency on the development of the next iteration of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan and its supporting Regional Fire Management Plans. This led to a submission that provided direct input into the development of these plans before they went to public consultation. The submission promoted the need for smaller, more manageable, mosaic-pattern burns on a local scale, these taking into account the actual vegetation, topography and weather over the period beyond the burn itself and leaving the canopy intact to prevent weeds and fire-adapted species returning. It also discussed the need to utilise some level of Indigenous and ecological burns as part of bushfire fuel reduction.

- Continued work on ensuring the push for an increase in mountain bike tourism takes account of environmental considerations.

The subcommittee is currently researching and preparing its submission to the ACT Woodlands Strategy and the outcomes of this will be discussed in the next *Bulletin*. The subcommittee is also considering the potential effects on the environment of acceptance of the development applications for the NSW section of the Ginninderry development and for the Coombs Peninsula in the Molonglo River Corridor.

Well done to Clive, John, George and Cynthia for their support of the subcommittee's activities. If any of the above actions are of interest, please feel free to contact me on 0410 875 731.

Rod Griffiths, Convener

Update on the NPA goanna project – the 2018–19 season

This is a summary of developments with the goanna project since the last update in the March 2019 Bulletin.

In the weeks since the last update, much science work has been done in the '99 per cent perspiration' category, with no '1 per cent inspiring' findings to report yet. We have visited the Naas Valley more than weekly, mainly to radio-track goannas, re-glue their harnesses and download GPS fixes. Other jobs included: searching for termite mounds; maintaining camera traps on mounds with goanna diggings; and investigating places where clusters of GPS fixes showed something was attracting a goanna there. An account of recent efforts to catch goannas and remove their GPS packs is given in more detail below.

An interesting number?

We are at the end of our second goanna 'summer' season at Naas Valley. Last year (the 2017–18 season) we captured and identified 12 individual goannas. This year (2018–19) we captured and identified 33, including six re-captures from 2017–18. A simple calculation using those figures tells us the Naas Valley population must be only in the tens of animals (previously I had guessed low hundreds).

Next year we should have a more reliable population estimate because we will start with 39 marked animals, rather than 12. And by then we will also have a mark–resight estimate from the camera trapping for comparison. But any population estimate is better than what was previously available for this species. Given that Rosenberg's Goanna density (goannas/km²) at Naas is obviously higher than in other mainland populations we are familiar with, and the extent of the site is also greater than others in the ACT, a population estimate of only tens of animals, if confirmed, would highlight a potential vulnerability of this species in our region. That concern is increased by the knowledge that the high density at Naas dates from only the early 2000s. Being so recent, there is no confidence that the high density is permanent.

Autumn goanna movements. Squares mark GPS fixes recorded by Goanna 14 which left his home range (lower cluster of squares) in late March and travelled approximately 5 km north-east to a burrow high on a north facing slope that is to the north east of Horse Gully Hut.

Removing the GPS packs

The planned 3-day session to remove GPS packs in the first week of April failed. We removed only one of the 10 GPS packs in 4 days with up to six people per day. A second 4-day session was better, in which six more packs were retrieved. Further work continued as time permitted. As at 15 May, all but one of the GPS packs is in hand and ready to send to the USA for refurbishing, ready for another season of work next spring and summer. The 10th GPS pack is on Goanna X, which is proving quite a challenge to catch. We also have one animal with just its radio, so we are still trying to catch that one too (Goanna 14).

It was important to remove the GPS packs in order to not lose equipment that costs \$3,500 per animal, and which can be refurbished for an additional season at a cost of \$800. The radio beacons by which we find the animals, including to get GPS downloads, will not last through winter if left on the animals. In that case, the valuable GPS packs would probably be lost.

However, there was a positive aspect to the delay. An unexpected episode of goanna movement has been revealed. Several of the goannas were captured in places we did not know they ever visited, up to 4 km outside their previously known range. For example, the map below shows Goanna 14 moved 4 km beyond his normal home range. We wonder if these movements are toward 'winter quarters' in warmer locations.

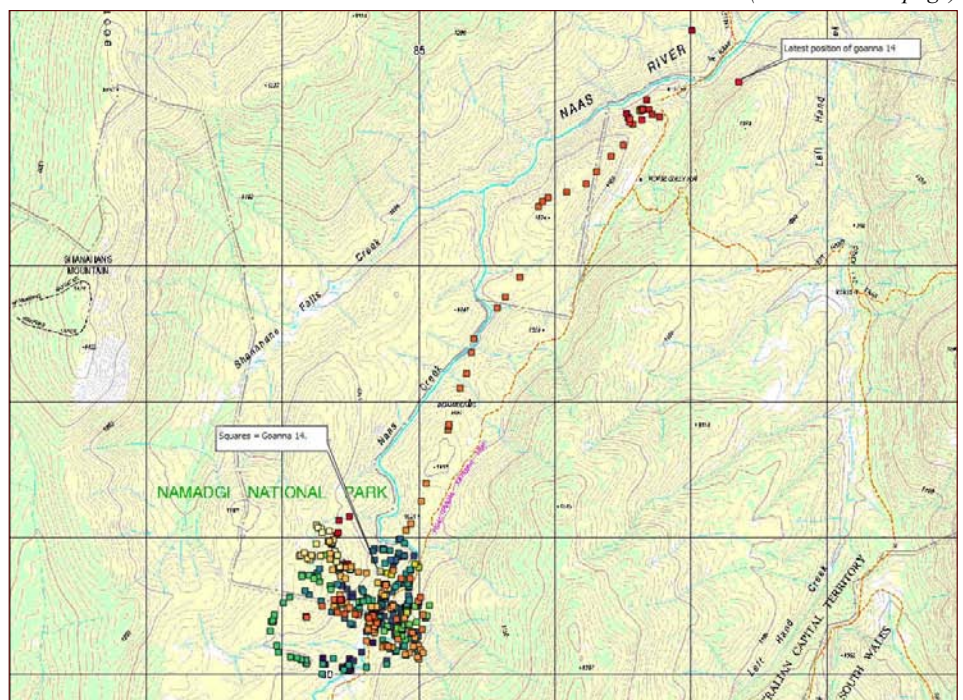
Whatever the explanation, we know about these autumn movements only because the GPS packs were not retrieved as easily and quickly as those in our pilot survey last year.

The delay in catching the goannas seems to have occurred this year because: (i) the goannas are more reluctant to enter traps than they have been previously; (ii) they have moved to unexpected places (and some are still moving); and (iii) several were well away from the road, in places that are time-consuming to get to. Perhaps the goannas are seeking areas where sunlight hours are longer, on the higher parts of the valley sides. If so, they are making a trade-off between cooling due to increasing altitude (called 'lapse rate') and heating due to longer periods of sunlight ('insolation').

Replacing GPS with radios

When GPS packs are removed, the goannas are being fitted with small VHF radios. These are unlikely to be any impediment over winter or when the goannas are underground. The radios will allow us to find those animals at the commencement of the next season for attachment of refurbished GPS packs, something that is most important as a way to include females in the study. Females have proved elusive, but less so at the end of the summer season, so by using the radios, a female from the end of the previous season can in future be included from the start of the following season.

(continued next page)



Update on the goanna project – the 2018–19 season (continued)

In addition, we will use the radios to find the goannas' winter burrows so the burrows can be photographed, characterised and monitored. Can we find ways to describe the winter burrows so that rabbit control operators have simple rules for avoiding them when treating rabbit burrows? Are the winter burrows important resources, re-used repeatedly over years, or even decades? Are their entrances used as 'communication posts' by several goannas? Activity loggers in three of the radios will provide clues about energy expenditure by the goannas and we will also use camera traps to monitor how much, if at all, the goannas emerge from the burrows during winter, and what attention the burrows receive from other goannas and other species.

First evidence of foxes

The first evidence of the fox population in the Naas Valley found in our project was detected in mid-April. A carcass was found on Naas Valley Fire Trail. Until then, in the two summer seasons, no camera-trap photo, sighting, scat, track or bark of a fox was recorded, an extraordinary result for mainland Australia. It contrasts with the numbers seen of Eastern Grey Kangaroos, Red-necked Wallabies, Black Wallabies, goannas, wallaroos, Pigs, Fallow Deer, dingoes and Sambar Deer (in decreasing order of numbers detected). Foxes are present in the Naas Valley as expected but it seems their density must be unusually low, which probably helps explain the locally high density of Rosenberg's Goannas, Red-necked Wallabies and Brush-tailed Possums.

More observations regarding termite mounds

As mentioned previously, Rosenberg's Goannas depend on *Nasutitermes exitosus* termite mounds for egg-laying. Given that the Naas Valley appears to have the highest density of Rosenberg's Goannas of any local site, it is remarkable that the density of termite mounds is comparatively low. Other local sites, such as Ainslie–Majura and Black Mountain Nature Reserves, can contain hundreds of termite mounds per square kilometre where conditions are favourable. But so far we have the GPS coordinates of only 19 mounds of *Nasutitermes exitosus* and 17 mounds of *Coptotermes lacteus* in the Naas Valley, the latter being unsuitable for goanna breeding.

Last year, two *Nasutitermes exitosus* termite mounds were observed to have been dug by goannas, among a total of four mounds recorded at the time. One of the two produced hatchlings. This year, six of the 19 recorded *Nasutitermes mounds* were observed to have been dug by goannas (but about a third of the 19 mounds were not found in time to know whether they had been dug). Knowing the locations of at least six goanna-dug mounds, next spring we may again witness the emergence of hatchlings.

The highest altitude at which a *Nasutitermes* mound has so far been recorded is at 806 m, only 6 km up into the valley from the Namadgi boundary. According to some environmental impact guidelines, areas such as the upper Naas Valley, 20–25 km from the boundary, would not be surveyed for Rosenberg's Goanna, due to the apparent absence of *Nasutitermes*. Yet, with little effort we have captured and released eight Rosenberg's Goannas in that area. As yet there is no explanation for the anomalous presence of Rosenberg's Goanna in the apparent absence of *Nasutitermes*.

It seems likely that further searching for *Nasutitermes* mounds will help us find more female goannas, as well as hatchlings, so termite searching should be given a higher priority in future.

The 'Yellowtail' questions

A camera trap on one of the six goanna-dug termite mounds revealed repeated visits by a peculiar goanna which I called 'Yellowtail'. The last 15 cm of its tail was plain yellow like a Sand Goanna (*Varanus gouldii*) and the yellow spots on its toes were larger and brighter than normal. It was interpreted as a female guarding her nest, so in the hope of adding her to the study, we repeatedly watched for opportunities to noose her and often set a trap at the mound. The

trap caught Goanna A, a male which had originally been caught only 250 m distant but had not been seen for 15 months, and eventually it also caught a yellowish goanna. But examined closely, this yellow goanna seemed to lack some of Yellowtail's features. And it was male.

I went back to the photos from the camera trap and was surprised to find there had actually been two similar yellow-tailed individuals. Differences in their faces, toes and tail striping enabled them to be told apart. (And now one also has a number on its back, which will be useful if they come back to the same mound next season.)

It seems unlikely that chance alone would result in visits to the same termite mound by two distinctive individuals that differ in the same way. Are they siblings? Did two females lay in the same termite mound? (It had two excavations. I had initially assumed one was just a shallow exploratory hole that had been abandoned.) Or were they a male and female pair guarding their eggs (just like Goannas H and M the previous year)? Perhaps some answers will be revealed by the goanna catching and camera trapping next year, or by Jason's DNA study, mentioned below.

Liaison with Jason Dobry's PhD project

Twenty-eight goanna blood samples have been taken in the Naas Valley, with each sample divided between a part stored in a manner suitable for DNA sampling and another part for growing white-blood cells for chromosome study. Over summer, Jason Dobry found that fungal contamination had ruined many of the latter but new procedures and storage solutions seem to have overcome the problem because the later samples have grown well and produced useful information about chromosomes in Rosenberg's Goanna.

Other fauna

Our cameras on termite mounds and goanna burrows have recorded a variety of other species. Some of these are of interest, for example small mammals are seen to be more widespread than previously supposed, based on surveys with small mammal traps. Other species are also of interest, including records of Foxes and Sambar and Fallow Deer. I will start uploading the photos to Canberra Nature Map so these records are preserved where others can use them.

Parks and Conservation

The Parks and Conservation Service (PCS) has been supporting the project in the most useful way possible, by allowing us to use a double-cab 4WD

(continued on page 10)



'Yellowtail' guarding a termite mound.
Photo by Don Fletcher.

Update on the goanna project – the 2018–19 season *(continued from page 9)*

trayback vehicle whenever they can spare it.

Meanwhile, another part of PCS has sought advice on how to avoid goanna burrows during rabbit burrow treatment. A training session was conducted in Ainslie–Majura Nature Reserve and a manual is in preparation. We will be better informed after the burrow study to be conducted over winter (and may be able to improve the manual).

Talks and media

Two more PowerPoint presentations were made about local goannas and the NPA's research in the Naas Valley, one

talk to the ACT Herpetological Society and one to the Murrumbateman Landcare Group. I was interviewed again on ABC Radio Canberra (666).

Future funding

NPA has again this year submitted an application for an Environment Grant. The application mentions the possibility of providing results that would be immediately useful in park management. Rabbit burrow information was mentioned earlier. Also, the application refers to the large area (14 km²) of the Naas Valley to be burned this autumn, including the home ranges of several of

the research goannas, and the plans announced in the Draft Regional Fire Management Plan to burn large parts of the western face of the Clear Range in the next 5 years, including most of our research site. There are obvious ways in which the goanna study, if continued long enough, could inform fire management plans as well as rabbit control activities.

Don Fletcher

From the monthly meetings

NPA's monthly meetings introduce members to a wide range of topics. This was amply demonstrated in the first four meetings of 2019 which covered the smaller creatures of Mulligans Flat, bushfire management, the DNA of Rosenberg's Monitor and Little Eagles. Notice of meetings is given in the *Bulletin* and the monthly e-newsletter *Burning Issues*.

The wild things of Mulligans Flat woodland

Sam Nerrie, who has a self-confessed passion for Mulligans Flat, gave a photographic presentation of The Wild Things of Mulligans Flat Woodlands Sanctuary. Her photographs, some of which have won national and international awards, were mainly of the insect world of the sanctuary and included close-ups of Hanging Fly and Dragonfly. The presentation also featured a selection of the varied birdlife at Mulligans. Sam noted that most of the photos were taken in a year of good



*Swamp Wallaby eating wattle leaves.
Photo by Sam Nerrie.*

rains when insects were abundant which unfortunately for insect and other populations has not been the case over the past year.

ACT Parks and Conservation Service Regional Fire Management Plan

The ACT's next Regional Fire Management Plan (RFMP) for the 10 year period 2019–2028 is now being developed. It covers proposed fire-related works and fuel treatments on lands managed by Parks and Conservation. These works include prescribed burning, slashing and grazing and other types of fuel reduction, as well as fire trail maintenance. The RFMP is part of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan (SBMP) for the ACT which is reviewed on a 5-yearly basis.

*Hanging Fly with its spider prey.
Photo by Sam Nerrie.*

The new 10-year SBMP will be published in September 2019.

As part of the public consultation process¹ before the start of a formal consultation period, ACT Government speakers gave separate presentations to the NPA general meeting on different aspects of the ACT's bushfire management: Joe Murphy on the SBMP; Tony Scherl on the RFMP; Neil Cooper on the Bushfire Operational Plan; Margaret Kitchin elaborated on how ecological information feeds into these plans; and Deane Freeman informed us about first experiences with Aboriginal cultural burns in the ACT.

It was noted at the meeting that the new plan is being developed in the context of climate change and a greater understanding of fire behaviour and of ways to deal with it. The effects of climate change have already resulted in an extension of the fire season. In land-use planning in the ACT, zoning according to fire risk has been introduced. New houses and major extensions to existing houses have to meet conditions which accord with bushfire attack level values. A new concept of 'residual risk' has also been developed. This refers to the risk that remains once bushfire mitigation (such as prescribed burning, slashing and clearing and no treatment) has taken place.

Fire also incurs an ecological risk. A measure of such risk is the tolerable fire interval, which is the interval between fires that minimises the loss of species for each vegetation community. Fire management of ecological assets includes fire exclusion with fuel reduction burns aiming to produce a mosaic of smaller burnt areas across a landscape.

(continued next page)



From the monthly meetings (continued)



The two monitor species of the ACT region; left, Rosenberg's (*Varanus rosenbergi*), and right, Lace (*Varanus varius*). Photos by Philip Gatenby.

As noted in the latest report from the Environment Subcommittee, NPA has prepared a submission on the next iteration of the SBMP and its supporting RFMP.

¹ Members of the public can also make comments through the website www.yoursay.act.gov.au/bushfire-management-plan when it is put out for consultation.

Rosenberg's genetic pool

Jason Dobry is a PhD candidate from the University of Canberra studying goanna genetics. His presentation to the NPA was titled 'Rosenberg's genetic pool'. Jason explained that he has always been interested in reptiles, catching rattlesnakes as a kid in Washington State in the USA where he grew up. In his various occupations since leaving school he has learnt how to isolate mitochondrial DNA from blood samples to look at lineages and how, for example, populations deviate from one another.

While the focus of his PhD is on Ridge-tailed Monitor (*Varanus acanthurus*), he is collecting blood and tissue samples from Rosenberg's Monitor (*V. rosenbergi*) and Lace Monitor (*V. varius*) for DNA sampling

and for growing white blood cells for chromosome study to:

- develop the DNA sequencing of all individuals
- determine the relatedness of individuals
- do a genome subtraction
- isolate the W chromosome sequences.

Questions he hopes his research will shed light on include:

- Where did varanids originate? This is the subject of some debate according to Jason: was it Laurasia (where there is a fossil record going back 70 million years) or Gondwanaland (which has a paucity of fossils, yet Australia currently has more varanid species than any other country)?
- What are the differences between *V. rosenbergi* and *V. varius*? These are the two monitors of the ACT region. Both are active predators and have probably been taxonomically confused for a long time. Interestingly, *V. rosenbergi* occurs across southern Australia mostly south of 31 degrees. Populations occur around Sydney, the ACT, southern South Australia, including Kangaroo Island, and southern Western Australia. *V. varius*, on the other hand, is mainly confined to eastern Australia with few records west of Adelaide.

- What determines the sex of a goanna? As a possibly complicating aside, Jason noted that monitor females can lay eggs without male participation and that all the offspring thereof turn out to be males.

The Little Eagle project

Michael Mulvaney, the Senior Conservation Officer of the ACT Government, gave a presentation on the The Little Eagle citizen science project, which has involved studying the numbers and distribution of Little Eagles (*Hieraaetus morphnoides*) in and around the ACT, using GPS wireless trackers. The research is looking at the foraging areas of the birds, their dispersal, diet and breeding rates. Little Eagles are the world's second smallest eagle (wingspan ~1m, the smaller male weighing in at about 0.8 kg), endemic to mainland Australia and, in the ACT, mainly found in open forest, where they breed in August and the young fledge around the following February. Evidence suggests that ACT numbers are in slow decline with breeding pairs falling in recent years from 12 to 9.

Michael explained that the research has followed a number of birds, including one male Little Eagle for two seasons. In the first season, the bird

(continued on page 12)



Left. Temporary mobile goanna processing lab. Photo by Kevin McCue.

Right. Little Eagle. Photo by Stuart Rae.



From the monthly meetings *(continued from page 11)*

didn't breed; in the second it did. Its foraging area was found to be about 65 km² but in the breeding year the bird, perhaps not surprisingly, spent more time closer to the nest. Its diet was young rabbit (60 per cent), birds (30 per cent, predominately rosellas) and reptiles and insects (including cicadas, Christmas beetles, Blue-tongue Lizards and Shinglebacks making up the remaining 10 per cent). Diet seems to relate to the food available because other birds have been found to make up to 50 per cent of the diet of other Little Eagles.

The distance Little Eagles travel has been a surprise. One individual was

tracked along the Murrumbidgee to Wagga Wagga, returned to the ACT and then travelled, in a now well reported trip, over 3,000 km in 18 days to the Northern Territory, covering 480 km in one day and reaching a top speed of 68 kph. Other birds have travelled north to the Gulf of Carpentaria and eastern Queensland beyond Bundaberg. Little Eagles have travelled south, spent time in Melbourne (where there is a good supply of Rock Dove and Silver Gull), with one then going to Adelaide and on to Port Pirie. Others have not travelled as far. Common features of this dispersal according to Michael include following watercourses and avoiding

large expanses of water. This helps explain the Little Eagle's absence from Tasmania.

Michael then went on to say that so far the research has collected only limited information about female Little Eagles. The plan now is to fit 19 birds with transmitters (with NPA funding two transmitters) and to find out more about nesting sites locally. Moreover, while the Little Eagle is declared vulnerable in the ACT and NSW, given the vast distances individuals travel, its protection surely requires a national approach.

Sonja Lenz and Philip Gatenby

Impact – a tired warrior in the battle for the environment

It seems to me that, like brumbies, the word 'impact' has gone feral in reporting and discussions on matters concerning the natural environment and, like wild horses, it is causing real damage – to communication. I worry that, due to chronic overuse, 'impact' has, ironically in its case, joined 'address' in the lexicon of ineffectual descriptors oft times enlisted in reporting on matters concerning the environment. We seem to be forever exhorting governments to adopt policies that 'address climate change', and sometimes they say that they will, and do, but what does that mean? More often than not, it seems to

mean their announcing that 'we've thought about it [addressed it!]' – full stop. They then see themselves as off the hook. Perhaps if we keep asking them to adopt the policies needed to combat or reverse existentially dangerous climate change that will destroy the 'economy', which seems to be the 'be all and end all' [*sic*] these days, they'll be inclined to pay a little more attention. And so too might it be with 'impact'. Maybe we should stop pussyfooting around writing about, for example, feral horse *impacts* on streambanks and the consequences thereof, and oil transmission of the message using words of power and

precision, like *damage, destruction, injury, harm, desecration, ruination, impairment* and so on. And what about the Great Barrier Reef? We're currently doing more than *impacting* it; various agents appear intent on *killing* it.

Our messages on the state and protection of the environment are critical. Surely we should be working as hard as we can to ensure that we use plain, cogent and unambiguous words in framing them.

Ed Highley

NPAC Annual Meeting and AGM, 18-20 October 2019

The annual meeting of the National Parks Australia Council will be held at the Namadgi Visitor Centre from Friday 18 October to Sunday 20 October.

Delegates from NPA organisations in Qld, NSW, Vic, Tas, ACT and the Nature Conservation Society of South Australia (NCSSA) will gather to discuss policy and program issues. NPA ACT is hosting the meeting.

NPA ACT members are encouraged to attend the sessions and assist with catering and planning.

On Saturday afternoon delegates will visit NPA ACT's Art Week at Gudgenby Cottage.



NPA ACT Art Week at Gudgenby Cottage will be held his year from 18 October to 25 October.

Members of NPA ACT are invited to join in for a day, overnight, or several days to explore Gudgenby Valley through painting, photography, drawing, writing or other artistic endeavours. Come out for the day and picnic with inspiration.

An Open Day for association members and the public will be held on Sunday 20 October.

For information and to book, contact Adrienne Nicholson on 6281 6381 or Hazel Rath on 4845 1021.

The bush in our backyard



The Pacific Koel female loved mulberries.

I love their call, even at 3 am – what are they trying to communicate and with whom at that time of day? This past summer was a real bonanza for Koels in Aranda and I fancy elsewhere in the ACT. No doubt it was the laden mulberry tree that attracted them to our backyard which enabled me to get some close-up photos, something that has eluded me in past years, when all I got was a distant glimpse here and there, so shy.

Not so the possum, taken to curling up in the dense Wonga Vine on our back deck. Perhaps he likes the smell of the barbeque most lunchtimes. We suspect his normal tree hollow gets a tad warm on the 40°C+ days. Previously a Ring-tailed Possum camped out there, but this year a juvenile Brush-tailed Possum has assumed tenancy most days, to forage in our garden at night – we are not happy, but it was their territory first.

Brush-tailed Possum in a cool day-time retreat.

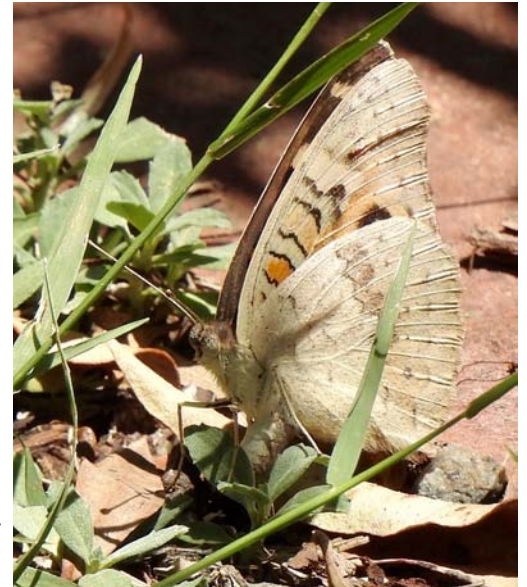


We hear the flocks of small birds doing their rounds at about 4 am, the coolest part of the day, and then they disappear somewhere even cooler and we do not see them again. The bird bath needs a top-up most mornings so I assume they are still bathing there. My bird ID is not great at that time of the day: I can distinguish Silvereyes by their call but there are others.

Honeyeaters of all sizes and shapes are about but the Red Wattlebirds quickly chase them out of their territory. Magpies, Peewees and many species of parrot and cockatoo call in. Three inquisitive Wedge-tailed Eagles spiraled over a group of us weeding in the Aranda Bushland in early January.

One of our great pleasures was watching a pair of Spotted Pardalotes excavating a tunnel under our back step – actually, he stood guard a metre above the adit while she tunnelled and brought the waste to the entrance at which point he flew down scooped it all out with one foot, in one action, then returned to his post.

This year has been a disappointment in the Lepidoptera department in our backyard: butterflies are few and far apart. The regal Orchard and Dainty Swallowtails cruise by occasionally without stopping for a photo opportunity, and the Blues on our groundcover are sparse, though a Meadow Argus was photographed laying eggs there. An Australian Painted Lady and a Common Brown drop in occasionally to nectar on the numerous native shrubs flowering at the moment (January) but in the years



Meadow Argus in the grass.

since Suzi Bond, our butterfly book author, first alerted us to their existence, their numbers have dwindled.

Delicate and Three-toed Skinks are hanging on despite the ravages of the evil Currawongs. We wonder whether up-hill building work has cut off the normal access tracks of Blue-tongues, but a hyperactive male visited recently. Normally we see several adults and young passing by on their way to wherever – they do not stay; not enough snails.

Renewal of suburban Aranda is taking its toll on nature, old 3br Govies are being replaced by MacMansions that take up the whole block with the loss of trees, shrubs and groundcover, changing forever this lovely old suburb once nestling quietly in the bush.

Kevin McCue

Photos by Kevin McCue

Spotted Pardalote outside the nest burrow entrance.



Aboriginal ring trees

While paddling on the Goulburn River upstream of Shepparton in 2015, I noticed a tree with branches that had grown into each other, forming a double ring. I had not seen anything like it before but put it down to a curious freak of nature and didn't think much more about it. Two years later a friend mentioned that she had seen an Aboriginal ring tree. 'What is a "ring tree"?' I asked.

Basically, a ring tree is a tree in which the branches of a young tree are tied together in such a way as to grow in the form of a ring. There seems to be little publicly available information about these trees but it appears that ring trees had, and continue to have, significance to the Aboriginal people as boundary markers or as identifying significant cultural locations in the landscape, such as water junctions and inlets, campsites and burial grounds. Most ring trees that I am aware of are in south-eastern Australia, in particular along inland rivers, although I have also heard reports of them in coastal areas.

All ring trees hold stories and have spiritual and cultural significance ...

A good article on the topic of ring trees appears in *The Conversation*.¹ Here it talks about how the Watti Watti people of northern Victoria visit and pay their respects to ring trees in the River Red Gum forests along the Murray River. All ring trees hold stories and have spiritual and cultural significance, though some that still exist have lost their connection to culture. Some are now in paddocks, the land having been cleared around them. They are isolated from their cultural landscape.

It is possible that some rings are naturally occurring although they may

Goulburn River ring tree.



still hold cultural significance. However, there are numerous ring trees that are undoubtedly formed by human modification.

Generally, for rings to form naturally the tree branches would have to rub against each other and be held relatively steady for a period of time for the branches to fuse together. This would only occur for relatively thick branches that would not move much in light breezes. Over time, the outer surfaces of the branches would fuse and they would appear as one branch crossing over in front of the other; i.e. two distinct branches are touching.

... what a change of peoples, cultures and land uses [this tree] must have witnessed over its lifetime!

The ACT ring tree pictured in this article shows a single ring. The branches that form this ring clearly have grown into each other from an early age; i.e. most likely the outer layer of bark was removed and then the branches of the sapling were tied together. This tree is in a location beside a road that many of our readers would have driven past numerous times on the way to Tidbinbilla. The tree is showing signs of old age – what a change of peoples, cultures and land uses it must have witnessed over its lifetime!

The Goulburn River ring tree shows a double ring that I believe could have been formed only by tying branches together to form the grafts. I have also noticed two double-ring trees (one of which is pictured) on the Edward River upstream of Deniliquin.

There is a heritage grant for investigating ring trees within the ACT. It involves members of the local Aboriginal community and people with expertise in tree growth and scar causation. It is reassuring that these special trees are being investigated and their cultural significance being assessed. On the one hand, publicity about ring trees is good, as it makes the public aware that these trees have significance and they are an enduring sign of Indigenous culture in our region and among our suburban homes. On the other hand, one is wary of publicising their locations, since some members of our community may not



Ring tree near the Murrumbidgee River, ACT.

respect the significance of these trees which may lead to targeted vandalism or their destruction.

My article 'Paddling the Edward River' in the March 2019 issue of the *Bulletin* also has a picture of a ring tree.

Mike Bremers

¹ Jacqueline Power 2018, *The Conversation*, 25 June, The ring trees of Victoria's Watti Watti people are an extraordinary part of our heritage <https://theconversation.com/the-ring-trees-of-victorias-watti-watti-people-are-an-extraordinary-part-of-our-heritage-91310>

Photos by Mike Bremers.

Edward River ring tree.



NPA outings program

June – September 2019



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*, outings@npaact.org.au.

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*, (outings@npaact.org.au) 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.

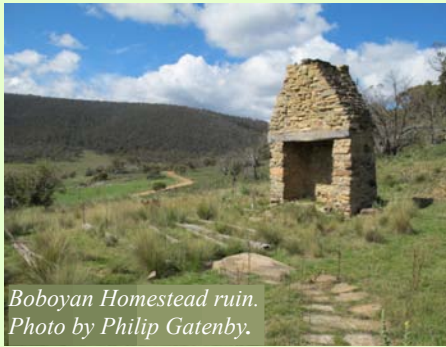
Children under 18 years of age are welcome to come on NPA ACT activities provided they are accompanied by a parent, guardian or close relative who will be required to sign a specific *Risk Waiver for a Child* form.

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@inet.net.au



South Ramshead Range. Photo by Mike Bremers.



Boboyan Homestead ruin.
Photo by Philip Gatenby.

1 June Saturday walk Boboyan and Pheasant Hills

Meet at Kambah Village Shops car park at 8:30 am. A walk from Brayshaws Hut up Boboyan Hill for views through the trees then across to Pheasant Hill. From Pheasant Hill we will head north towards the Boboyan Homestead ruin before returning along the Old Boboyan Road.

Drive: 160 km, \$64 per car
Map: Yaouk 1:25,000
Grading: 2 B/E
Leader: Steven Forst
Contact: 0428 195 236 or
steven.forst@iinet.net.au

8 June Saturday work party Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group

Meet at the Namadgi Visitor Centre, Tharwa at 9:00 am. **Note New Starting Time.** Car pool to Gudgenby Valley. Collection and disposal of wire and fencing materials at Eleanor's Grove and adjacent areas. Tools provided.

Leader: Doug Brown
Contact: 6247 0239 or
kambalda@tpg.com.au

8 June Saturday Walk Admiration Point

As the name implies Admiration Point offers spectacular views of the Budawangs, particularly the cliffs of Mount Owen and The Castle, in good weather. Walk from the Wog Wog entrance of Morton National Park, mostly on track, some of which may be overgrown. Depending on the state of the track there may be time for a side trip to Corang Peak. Climb of about 500 m. Expect an early start. Contact leader, preferably by email, by Thursday 6 June for meeting time and transport arrangements.

Drive: 220 km, \$88 per car
Map: Corang 1:25,000
Grading: 4 A/D
Leader: Philip Gatenby
Contact: 0401 415 446 or
philip.gatenby@gmail.com

16 June Sunday walk Nimmo Hill

Depart 7:00 am. Breakfast in Cooma at 8:15 am. Drive to Nimmo Hill via Rocky Plain, follow Island Bend Fire Trail for 4 km and park. Climb 200 m to Round Mountain summit (1,560 m) and descend west to CSIRO Rabbiters Hut for lunch. Return to cars via Gungarlin River (8 km). Time permitting, we will do another short walk in the area. Afternoon tea in Cooma. Contact leader by Friday 14 June for meeting place and weather check.

Drive: 330 km, \$132 per car
Map: Nimmo Plain 1:25,000
Grading: 1 B/C/F
Leader: Brian Slee
Contact: 6281 0719 or
brianslee@iprimus.com.au



Gudgenby Valley. Photo by Philip Gatenby.

22 June Saturday work party Fence removal – Gudgenby Valley

This year we will continue the work on the fence line to the north-west of the valley near the site of Rowleys Hut and work on the fences within 1 km of the Boboyan Road along the track 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: Brian Slee
Contact: 6281 0719 or
brianslee@iprimus.com.au

26 June 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

29 June Saturday Walk Orroral Cathedral

A perfect winter's walk up the lovely Orroral Valley from the campground, following old vehicle tracks to the north-west side of Spot Height 1201, sometimes called the Orroral Cathedral, about 1.5 km ESE of the old tracking station site. We



Orroral Cathedral. Photo by Philip Gatenby.

then climb about 200 m vertical height gain through some scrub, with some rock scrambling, to the summit. Return the same way. Please contact the leader, preferably by email, by Thursday 27 June for meeting place and departure time.

Drive: 80 km, \$32 per car
Map: Rendezvous Creek, 1:25,000
Grading: 2 A/B/C/E
Leader: Barrie R
Contact: 0437 023 140 or
brdr001@bigpond.net.au

7 July Sunday Walk Gungahlin via light rail

Meet at 9:00 am in car park on corner London Circuit and Northbourne Avenue, west of Northbourne (free parking). Board tram at Alinga Street and alight at Manning Clark Crescent, Gungahlin. Walk 2 km via Lyall Gillespie Corridor to *Frankies* at Forde for coffee. Return to Gungahlin Place via Yerrabi Pond (2 km) and take tram to Elouera Street, Braddon. Seafood lunch at *Catch* in Lonsdale Street. Walk back to car park.

Map: UBD Canberra Street Directory, map 29
Grading: 1 A
Leader: Brian Slee
Contact: 6281 0719 or
brianslee@iprimus.com.au

14 July Sunday Walk (snowshoe) Mount Perisher, Mount Wheatley

Early start. Drive via Jindabyne to Bullocks Flat terminal. Take Skitube train to Blue Cow terminal. Snowshoe south to Back Perisher and climb Mount Perisher. Descend to Perisher Gap, cross Kosciuszko Road and climb Mount Wheatley. Follow Porcupine Track to Skitube station at Perisher Valley. Afternoon tea Jindabyne. For weather check, departure time and departure point, contact leader by Friday evening.

Drive: 350 km, \$140 per car + Skitube fare
Map: Perisher Valley 1:25,000
Grading: 1 A/B
Leader: Brian Slee
Contact: 6281 0719 or
brianslee@iprimus.com.au

NPA outings program June – September 2019 (page 3 of 4)

20 July Saturday Walk Rendezvous and Middle Creeks

Easy walking in the beautiful Rendezvous Creek and Gudgenby Valleys. From the car park walk up the Rendezvous Creek Valley to a rock overhang, possibly visiting some historic sites on the way. After a pause here backtrack and then curve around to the Cascades on Middle Creek. We return to the cars via an ancient rock shelter. Mostly along old tracks, some open grassland and tussocks, a small amount of scrub. Very small height gain overall. About 17 km, so you will need to be fit and able to walk well on the off track sections. Please contact the leader, preferably by email, by Thursday 18 July for meeting place and departure time.

Drive: 92 km, \$37 per car
Map: Rendezvous Creek, 1:25,000
Grading: 2 A/B/C
Leader: Barrie R
Contact: 0437 023 140 or
brdr001@bigpond.net.au



Middle Creek Cascades.
Photo by Philip Gatenby.

24 July 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

27 July Saturday Work Party Lower Cotter Catchment, Wilding Pines

This work party is a continuation of the activity undertaken in previous years. The area is undergoing significant rehabilitation following the removal of the pine plantation. The focus of this work party will be an inspection of the full area to determine how much pine regrowth has occurred. Bring loppers and/or bush saw. Replacement saw blades and gloves provided. Meet at Dillon Close, Weston, across Namatjira Drive from McDonald's at 8:30 am.

Drive: 45 km, \$18 per car
Leader: Brian Slee
Contact: 6281 0719 or
brianslee@iprimus.com.au

31 July 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 or
brdr001@bigpond.net.au

4 August Sunday Walk Shanahans Mountain and Yerrabi Track

Two or three short walks. First walk to Shanahans Mountain for morning tea with views east towards the coast. Then walk the Yerrabi Track, past Boboyan Trig, for lunch on a rock tor with views over Namadgi (about 5 km return). On the way back, if time permits, may divert to walk to the Yankee Hat Aboriginal paintings for those interested. This walk will be weather dependent; snow could make things difficult. Meet at Kambah Village Shops at 8:30 am.

Drive: 120 km, \$48 per car
Map: Yaouk and Colinton 1:25,000
Grading: 1 A
Leader: Mike S
Contact: 0412 179 907



Boboyan Trig. Photo by Philip Gatenby.

10 August Saturday Work Party Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group

Meet at the Namadgi Visitor Centre, Tharwa at 9:00 am. Car pool to Gudgenby Valley. Fence removal in the vicinity of Gudgenby Homestead. Tools provided.

Leader: Kevin McCue
Contact: 6251 1291 or
mccue.kevin@gmail.com

18 August Sunday Walk (snowshoe) Cootapatamba and beyond

Early start. Drive via Jindabyne to Thredbo. Take Kosciuszko Express chairlift to Eagles Nest. Snowshoe past North Ramshead, descend to and cross Swampy Plain River. Head west to Abbott Ridge and explore area before returning via similar route. Afternoon tea at Jindabyne. Not suitable for beginners. For weather check, departure time and departure point, contact leader by Friday evening

16 August. Chains may be required.
Drive: 420 km, \$168 per car + park entry and chairlift fees
Map: Perisher Valley, Youngal 1:25,000
Grading: 2 A/B
Leader: Brian Slee
Contact: 6281 0719 or
brianslee@iprimus.com.au

24 August Saturday Work Party Pine Control – Stoney Creek Nature Reserve

This is the fifth formal NPA work party in this area. The activity will be a continuation of the work conducted in July 2018. Bring loppers and bush saw. Replacement saw blades and gloves will be provided. Meet at Dillon Close, Weston, across Namatjira Drive from McDonald's at 8:30 am.

Drive: 35 km, \$14 per car
Leader: Brian Slee
Contact: 6281 0719 or
brianslee@iprimus.com.au

28 August Wednesday Walk Joint NPA / BBC / CBC Activity

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

Leader: Mike S
Contact: 0412 179 907

31 August Saturday Walk Mount Palerang

A lovely walk to a high, free-standing peak. From the picturesque car park/picnic spot on Mulloon Creek in Tallaganda National Park we follow a ridge upwards and through a variety of vegetation and terrain to the summit for lunch with great views. Mostly off track but not too much scrub. Lots of loose rough ground and boulders and some scrambling and slippery places. After leaving the summit there is a short, very steep, scrubby descent, with more boulders, to a footpad which takes us down to the Mulloon Creek Valley and a fire trail back to the cars. You will need to be fit, have stamina and be happy scrambling and off track. About 10 km and 500 m height gain. We will need high clearance vehicles. Please contact the leader, preferably by email, by Thursday 29 August for meeting place and departure time.

Drive: 100 km, \$40 per car
Map: Bombay 1:25,000
Grading: 2 A/B/C/D
Leader: Barrie R
Contact: 0437 023 140 or
brdr001@bigpond.net.au



David Large enjoying rest time on an easy pack walk in Rendezvous Valley.

8 September Sunday Get-together to Remember David Large Orroral Valley Picnic Area

David Large, who died in March, was a conscientious member and supporter of the NPA and other bushwalking clubs. He was a keen bushwalker, walks leader, committee member and friend. All friends and colleagues of David are invited to a remembrance get-together at the Orroral Valley Picnic Area, starting at about 12 noon. Beforehand, at 10:00 am, there will be a short walk to the Orroral Homestead. Come for the walk and get-together or just the get-together. Bring lunch and memories of David.

Organisers: Tim Walsh and Mike Smith
Contact: 0412 179 907

14 September Saturday Work Party Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group

Meet at the Namadgi Visitor Centre, Tharwa at 9:00 am. Car pool to Gudgenby Valley. Repair fence in to Gudgenby Homestead (subject to availability of ranger staff) and associated weed control. Tools provided.

Leader: Doug Brown
Contact: 6247 0239 or kambalda@tpg.com.au

22 September Sunday Walk Guthega (snowshoe)

Early start. Drive via Jindabyne to Guthega. Destination will depend on access and conditions. For weather check, departure time and departure point, contact leader by Friday evening, 20 September. Chains may be required.

Drive: 420 km, \$168 per car + Park entry fee.
Map: Perisher Valley and Geehi Dam 1:25,000

Grading: 2 A/B
Leader: Brian Slee
Contact: 6281 0719 or brianslee@iprimus.com.au

20–23 September Car Camp Give a Dam Campaign – Yerranderie area, Blue Mountains Joint NPA / CBC Activity

The aim is to support the campaign to prevent the wall of Warragamba Dam being raised, with subsequent damage to the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. Come and see some of the areas that would be affected. Participants are invited to make a donation to the campaign. On Friday morning, drive to Yerranderie in the south-eastern Blue Mountains to camp free for two nights next to the cars at Batsh Camp. Friday pm: Explore this old mining town or ascend Yerranderie Peak. Saturday: Follow the fire trail to Byrnes Gap, ascend Gander Head and explore the Axeheads, with wide-ranging views. Sunday: Drive back to the Mount Armour Fire Trail and ascend basalt-capped Mount Colong, the highest peak in the southern Blue Mountains. Monday: Drive home (about 4.5 hours).

Drive: ~\$200 per car
Maps: Yerranderie and Bindook 1:25,000
Grading: 3/4 C/D/E
Leader: Meg McKone
Contact: frankmckone@optusnet.com.au

25 September 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 or brdr001@bigpond.net.au

28 September Saturday Work Party Pine Island Fence Removal

This is a new activity in a reserve familiar to NPA work parties. The task consists of removing fencing from Pine Island Reserve. Please bring gloves – cutters, post puller, etc. will be provided. Meet at Kambah Village Shops at 8:45 am.

Drive: 25 km, \$10 per car
Leader: Brian Slee
Contact: 6281 0719 or brianslee@iprimus.com.au

Early Notice 5–7 October Pack Walk Mount Talaterang

After a long drive with a stop at Ulladulla for lunch, we have a short walk across Little Forest Plateau via Mount Bushwalker to a camp site at the top of Ngaityung Falls. The next day we climb down and then up onto Mount Talaterang with excellent views of Pigeon House Mountain and the Clyde Valley along the way, before returning to camp. Walk out and drive home on the third day. Contact leader by Wednesday 2 October.

Drive: 480 km, \$192 per car
Map: CMW Budawang
Grading: 1/2/1 A/B/C
Leader: Steven Forst
Contact: 0428 195 236 or steven.forst@iinet.net.au



Shanahans Mountain and The Tinderries. Photo by Philip Gatenby.

The AV1: a walk in the Dolomites

The Dolomites of northern Italy are one of the best known ranges of the European Alps. The name comes from the predominant rock of the mountains, dolomite, a mineral similar to limestone¹ which was first described in 1791 by French geologist Déodat Gratet de Dolomieu. The rock is very pale and gives the mountains a whitish appearance from a distance. Before the name Dolomites was adopted the range was referred to as the Pale Mountains.

Form and location

In reality the Dolomites are not a single mountain range, but a number of ranges, called groups, that are separated by deep valleys and mountain passes. Typically over 20 distinct mountain groups are recognised and this combination of mountain and valley landforms is summarised eloquently by Price in the Cicerone guide, *Trekking in the Dolomites*, as ‘rather than a continuous alpine chain, the Dolomites consist of self-contained formations that rise to dizzying heights in soaring peaks, enthralling sculpted shapes of delicately pale rock spires and breathtaking sheer walls towering over high altitude lunar-like plateaux’ (2011, p. 1). The highest peak, which contains the Dolomites’ only large glacier, is called Marmolada (3,343 m). There are about 20 peaks over 3,000 m.

The range covers an area of 15,942 km², between the Piave Valley and River Adige (east to west) and the Puster and Sugana Valleys (north to south), all within Italy. Of course this was not always the case: prior to World War 1 part of the mountains was in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and during the war the frontline between the Hapsburgs and Italian forces ran through the Dolomites.

Protection

About 9 per cent of the Dolomites are officially protected in national, regional and provincial parks, the largest being the Dolomiti Bellunesi National Park of

315 km² (about 2 per cent of the area). A similar sized, largely overlapping, area (1,419 km² or about 9 per cent, with a buffer zone of 893 km²), covering nine separate locations is World Heritage listed. The UNESCO listing makes special mention of the range’s distinctive mountain landscape of vertical and pale-coloured peaks with a variety of spectacular pinnacles, spires and towers, considered among the most attractive in the world. The World Heritage area covers five provinces and inevitably presents challenges for a common management system.

Long-distance footpaths

A multitude of footpaths criss-cross the Dolomites. Some were developed over the years by herders and shepherds and later by mountaineers, others date from World War 1 and were built for the movement of troops. Using some of these paths, six medium to high-level long-distance walking tracks have been established which traverse the Dolomites from north to south. Collectively they are known as the ‘Alte Via’ or, singularly, ‘Alte Vie’ and are usually abbreviated as the AVs 1 to 6. The AVs 1 and 2 are the most popular of the six tracks. Both are described in detail in the Cicerone guide, and we based our trek on the routes and refuges described in this guide. The AV1 is 120 km and the AV2, generally considered to be a bit harder, is an extra 40 km and goes higher. Both, however, contain variants which allow, for example, for easier or more scenic options. In 2015, my wife Jan and I walked most of the AV2 and decided to do the AV1 in 2018 as a prelude to 2.5 weeks of walking in Slovenia’s Julian Alps.

Long-distance alpine walks in Europe usually involve walking each day from mountain refuge to mountain refuge. This means not having to carry a tent or sleeping bag and only a limited amount of food, mainly enough for lunches, although some refuges serve

lunch (a popular pastime with the locals) or provide a take-away lunch. The AV1 is no exception and like other routes is crowded. The Cicerone guide advises independent walkers to book each night’s accommodation well ahead of setting out because of the popularity of the AV1

Lago di Braies. Photo by Philip Gatenby.



Our AV1 track. Map adapted from World Topographic Map (ArcGIS).

with organised groups. We booked over 4 months ahead yet still had difficulty getting a bed for our second night.

Our AV1

The AV1 starts at Lago de Braies, usually a short bus ride south-west from Dobbiaco in northern Italy but not so the day we started. Good weather, a weekend in late August and school holidays combined to produce a traffic jam on the road so our bus was about 20 minutes late getting to the lake. Its water is a beautiful blue-green and there were lots of people around, some in wooden rowboats. We walked along the lake to the southern shore then started to climb to Biella, our first refuge, 800 m up. Quite a bit of snow was lying around

(continued on page 20)



The AV1: a walk in the Dolomites *(continued from page 19)*



Rifugio Biella. Photo by Jan Gatenby.

from a 20 cm fall a couple of days earlier. At the refuge we organised our accommodation and dinner and breakfast and, conscious that the day was waning, dropped backpacks and climbed the nearby Croda del Becco (2,810 m), a steep, slippery, snowy, icy, pole-breaking 500 m above the refuge, with a large cross on top and an amazing view. Spread out before us was the rest of the Dolomites to the south and the alps of the Italian–Austrian frontier to the north while 1,300 m almost vertically below, Lago de Braies, still with a few rowboats on its surface.

In subsequent days as we progressed south much of the snow melted through a combination of warm sunny weather, initially, and then rain. By the end of day two we were in the Kingdom of Fanes, perhaps mythical, perhaps not, but nonetheless an important saga of the Ladin people who live in this part of Italy. The kingdom's name lives on in Rifugio Fanes, close to our night's accommodation. En route to Lagazuoi



White-winged Snowfinch.

Photos by Philip Gatenby.

Alpine Marmot.



the next day we crossed the impressive Forcella del Lago (2,486 m), a notch between Cima del Lago and Punte di Fanes, with views of Lagazuoi Piccolo and its refuge and the very steep descent on a zigzag path towards Lago di Lagazuoi that had to be negotiated before the climb up to the

refuge. From Rifugio Lagazuoi, perched above Passo Falzarego (meaning false king and another reference to the Kingdom of Fanes), is a remarkable view of numerous peaks including the massive Tofana to the east and Cinque Torri, Nuvolau (the following day's destination) and Averau (2,649 m) to the south. The refuge is large and popular, close to Cortina and accessible by cable car. It was also a site of fierce fighting in World War I between the Italians and Austrians. Testament to this are numerous trenches and tunnels, including one that goes down from near the refuge to the pass. It is now a variant on the AV1. Tours of these fortifications are available with a guide dressed in period military clothing. A flock of White-winged Snowfinch (*Montifringilla nivalis*) landed near the track as we returned from Lagazuoi's summit to the refuge.

We opted to stick to the longer standard AV1 route to get to Rifugio Nuvolau, rather than take the tunnel to Passo Falzarego. This took us by the spectacular Cinque Torri which might need renaming as one of its towers collapsed not so long ago, reminiscent of Australia's (fewer than) 12 Apostles. The towers are favoured by rock climbers and as we walked by parties of climbers from Britain, France and Germany (judging by the languages floating through the mist) were in action, undeterred by the fast-approaching thunderstorm. Rifugio Nuvolau sits in a spectacular location atop Nuvolau (2,574 m), so when leaving it's down in all directions. Despite overnight rain and morning mist we chose a cable-assisted section straight over the nose of the peak and down to Passo Giau (2,236 m) then, in occasional showers and through a couple of passes, on to Città di Fiume, nestled below the reportedly majestic, but to us invisible, Pelmo. Rain, which had been falling occasionally for a couple of days but fortunately mainly at



Cable-assisted descent from Nuvolau.

Photo by Philip Gatenby.

night, prevented our attempt on day 6 (Città di Fiume to Rifugio Coldai) at the long Pelmo variant (7 hours). Instead we took the standard route down to Passo Staulanza and Malga Vescova (famous for its cheeses) which then follows a war-time mule track, zig-zagging 300 m upwards to the mist-shrouded Coldai. A wonderfully warm refuge, it boasts the best drying room on the AV1, potable water and free wifi.

Beyond Coldai the landscape was different. The AV1 continued at a marginally lower altitude through forest for a change, beneath the west wall of Civetta (3,220 m) which came and went with the mist. Rounding its southernmost corner, the turrets and spires of the Moiazza (2,865 m) appeared. From Rifugio Vazzoler (our accommodation for the night), with its overgrown alpine botanic garden and orange cat, there were great views of Civetta's soaring towers. The weather cleared overnight and much of the route the next day from Vazzoler to Passo Duran provided views of the magnificent Moiazza to our left. At the pass there are two refuges and a quaint church. We were the only guests at Rifugio C Tomé and were treated to a delicious dinner. The first half of the following day's route from Passo Duran to Rifugio Pian de Fontana (almost two stages in our guidebook) skirted Tamer Grande (2,547 m) then Castello di Moschesin as it undulated to Forcella del Moschesin where a crumbling stone barracks was another reminder of WWI. Later that day we climbed Cima de Zita with views to our right of Talvena (2,542 m), temporarily returning us to the bare rocky landscape of earlier days of the walk, before plunging steeply to Rifugio Pian de Fontana, with a stop to photograph marmots. Signs warn walkers of the dangers of the descent to the refuge which, being grassy rather than rocky seems from a distance innocuous, yet we later found out that

(continued next page)

The AV1: a walk in the Dolomites *(continued)*



Descent to Rifugio Pian de Fontana. Photo by Jan Gatenby.

tragically 2 days previously a walker had fallen and died on this part of the track. A short day's downhill walk from Fontana ends at a bus stop on the road to Belluno, marking the most common end point of the AV1. In total we walked 126 km and climbed 8,000 m. Back in Belluno we enthusiastically collected our AV1 medallions from the information centre.

Other walkers

Four friends from Canberra started the AV1 three days before us. Their trip was disrupted by the snow we encountered on the ground on our first day but for the entire walk they stayed ahead of us. We retrieved a toiletries bag they'd left

behind at Coldai which later was reunited with its owner in Slovenia. As expected, however, we encountered many others walking part or all of the AV1. For much of the walk's first half we were frequently accompanied by a boisterous Welsh four-some, three men and a woman. We met them on day one on the long climb up from Lago de Braies.

On hearing our Australian accents they told us that they were from Old South Wales. A few days later after the exhilarating Forcella del Lago, and before the climb up to Lagazuoi, one of the men offered me a sloe gin. It was about 11 am and I was a bit slow on the uptake but eventually worked out that a home-made alcoholic beverage made from sloe berry (*Prunus spinosa*) was on offer. I politely declined. An English couple from a village near Lancaster were good company on the walk and in the refuges. Several nights we had meals with them. Others we got to know were from Austria, Germany, USA and New Zealand. The Kiwis arrived at Fontana at 8 pm having completed the final descent

to the refuge by torchlight. Italians were noticeable by their absence – presumably they hike on less popular paths or do day walks and mainly use the refuges for lunch.

It's no exaggeration that the Dolomites are among the world's most spectacular mountain ranges and arguably like no other. The AV1 and other long distance walking tracks give one the chance for a close-up view of the soaring towers and stark plateaux so characteristic of the range, but be prepared for steep climbs, lots of scree and, in places, many people.

Philip Gatenby

¹ The chemical formula of dolomite is $\text{CaMg}(\text{CO}_3)_2$, while that of limestone is CaCO_3 .

Sources:

Price, Gillian, 2011, *Trekking in the Dolomites*, Cicerone, Milnthorpe.
UNESCO, *Nomination of the Dolomites for Inscription on the World Natural Heritage List*, <http://www.dolomiti-unesco.org/sites/default/files/nomdoc.pdf>

NPA ACT work party summary November 2018 – April 2019

Month	Activity	Agency	Participants
November	Reedy Creek briar control. 752 briar and 1 hawthorn removed from Reedy Creek 500 m downstream from Brandy Flat Fire Trail crossing. The downstream section to Gudgenby River was sprayed by PCS in early 2019.	PCS	6
December, January	No work parties		
February	Glendale fences – 890 m of fence removed. Some 480 m left for 2020.	PCS	6
March	Kangaroo Creek woody weed control: 11 briar, 10 blackberry, 8 exotic trees, cut/dabbed in area approximately 100 m either side of creek from western boundary of Corin Forest site to 500 m to the southwest and around the new Square Rock car park. 150 broom removed and 36 dabbed at site 673127E 6067840N (MGA94). In two earlier work parties (2007, 2008) 17 briar, 1 blackberry and 4 apple removed from a 4 km length west of the old car park. Site seems stable – no need to revisit.	PCS	4
April	Bendora Arboretum wilding control. 3,360 conifers removed from within and around the plantation. An ongoing program to control the spread of exotics in an isolated bushland setting.	PCS	6

Martin Chalk



Bendora Arboretum.
Photo by Max Lawrence.

Heritage walks and published guides of the Conservation Council

Kinlyside walk

During the 2019 Canberra Heritage Festival, the Conservation Council of the ACT organised four walks, funded by the ACT Government, to showcase some of the natural treasures of the city, one of which was Kinlyside, an area seldom open to the public. Dr Michael Mulvaney led the walk on the morning of 18 April, together with lessor Craig Starr (and his two kelpies).

Kinlyside (also spelled 'Kinleyside') is located in the valley of Halls Creek, to the west of which lies Hall and the border ridge as it rises to One Tree Hill. To its east is the Gungahlin suburb of Casey. Although once considered for development as large rural blocks, the land is now chiefly designated as nature reserve and as offset areas against loss of habitat in other locations. It is leased for sheep grazing; the lessor also operates Gold Creek Station on Victoria Street (not to be confused with Gold Creek Village, Nicholls, or Gold Creek Homestead, Ngunnawal!) as a reception centre and tourist venue.

As one walks up the hill from Edna Thompson Crescent toward the water tank, the view east over Gungahlin to the peaks of Majura and Ainslie reveals what a lovely location Casey is. Even before leaving the suburban edge, however, one is met by a magnificent Blakelys Red Gum, a signal that the attraction of Kinlyside is its trees.

Indeed, the area is preserved in order to protect remnant Box-Gum grassy woodlands.

Craggy stringy barks were first encountered as we crossed the ridge; fallen timber remains in place to provide habitat. The scenery quickly changed to picturesque rural as we descended into the valley. Huge, ancient Yellow Box caught the eye. Native grasses dominated the open areas. Briars remain in place to promote bird life. The dogs had nothing to do as the sheep had been corralled for de-lousing and the kangaroos are left alone.

Treasures series of guides

In preparing for the outing, I examined the Conservation Council's 2007 publication *Gungahlin's Treasures* for information on Kinlyside, but there was none. I had been disappointed in the past when checking for Forest View homestead, Bonner, and remnant sections of the original Well Station Road, Harrison. However, it would be an enormous disservice to the publication to condemn it for its omissions as it is an absolute mine of information on Aboriginal, European and natural heritage, with maps and numerous photos. As a supplement to Graeme Barrow's guides, it has been invaluable in preparing for NPA walks in Gungahlin.

So I was fascinated to find that the Conservation Council volunteer at Kinlyside was selling four similar guides, namely *Belconnen's Treasures*, *Majura's Treasures*, *Molonglo's Treasures* and *Tuggeranong's Treasures*.

Kinlyside.
Photos by Brian Slee.
Looking towards Casey.

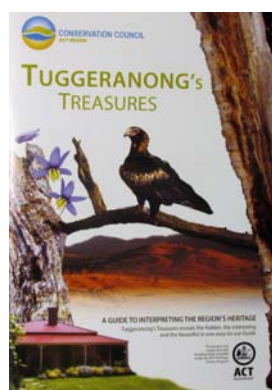
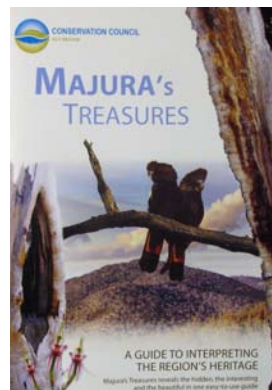
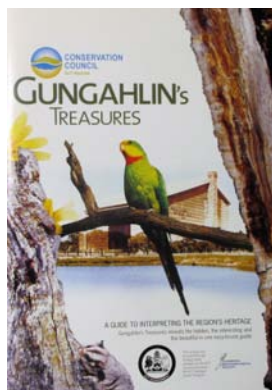


Michael Mulvaney.
Photo by Brian Slee.

Although published between 2011 and 2014, I had only fleetingly encountered the one on Molonglo and was unaware of the rest. None had been reviewed in the *NPA Bulletin*.

The cover of each guide has a unified, postage stamp-like, design in which a central bird motif is accompanied by a local scene and/or heritage building, bordered by relevant flora or fauna. The contents are similar, spread over 40 pages, and can be thoroughly reviewed on the Council's website (click 'Resources', then 'Treasures'). You will recognise the many photographers' names. Available from the Council for a mere \$5 each.

Brian Slee



Bushwalk reports

Butterflies of the Yerrabi Track

Date: 10 February 2019

Participants: Suzi Bond¹ (leader), Richard Allen, Mike Bremers, John Bundock, Alison Lawrence, Dean Lawrence, Max Lawrence, Phil Lawrence, Kat Ng, Jann Ollerenshaw, Kathy Porecki, Peter Ramshaw, Paul Ratcliffe, Caroline Wenger, Eric Wenger

Weather: Excellent bushwalking conditions of fine, calm and sunny weather but, at about only 21°C, a little cool for butterfly activity.

The Yerrabi Track to Boboyan Trig walk was established by NPA ACT in 1987 and is surely one of the best short walks Namadgi has to offer. Our group met at Lanyon Marketplace at 9:00 am for carpooling down to southern Namadgi, with a brief stop at the Hospital Hill lookout on the way. We arrived at the Yerrabi Track carpark and set off on this moderate walk of about 4 km (return).

The walk initially descends from the carpark through the Broad-leaved Peppermint (*Eucalyptus dives*) dominated forest that still bears signs of disturbance from the 2003 fires. Almost immediately we encountered a butterfly which would turn out to be the most common species of our walk – the Marbled Xenica (*Geitoneura klugii*). After getting a good look at the butterfly, the group proceeded to the swamp where the Little Dry Creek runs through and where there are some lovely Black Sallee eucalypts (*E. stellulata*). The walking trail then crosses some tussock grassland, where we stopped to look for some skippers, which specialise in this habitat. Instead we found several shimmering Forester moths (*Pollanisus* sp.) and a rather worn Bright-eyed Brown (*Heteronympha cordace*). Bright-eyed Browns are specialists of these High Country swamps, as the food plants of their larvae are the *Carex* sedges that grow there.

We left the open swampy grassland to ascend through Mountain Gum (*E. dalrympleana*) and Snow Gum

(*E. pauciflora*) forest. The trail became steeper here and many Marbled Xenicas accompanied us during our time in the forest, often basking with open wings in the dappled sunlight. We also heard a Superb Lyrebird and several small insectivorous birds like the Brown and the Striated Thornbill in this part of our walk. The walking track then veered to the right and gradually lifted out of the forest and onto a small rocky, grassy plateau with a few Snow Gums clinging to it, and revealing excellent mountain views. We continued past Boboyan Trig, down to the signposted zone of contact where sedimentary meets igneous rock, and onto the Tor Viewpoint. Here we took a break for an early lunch, absorbing the magnificent view to our west and listening to Gang-gangs in the trees behind us. A couple of White's Skinks emerged from under a rock to enjoy the sunshine with us.

After lunch, we retraced our steps to the Boboyan Trig. With the slightly warmer temperatures this time, there was some hilltopping activity by Marbled Xenicas, some very worn male Common Browns (*Heteronympha merope*), a Yellow Admiral (*Vanessa itea*), a likely but unconfirmed Two-spotted Line-blue (*Nacaduba biocellata*), and a very interesting Lycaenid which did not linger for terribly long, but was larger and darker than the possible Two-spotted Line-blue.

We then continued down the trail back through the forest where an Omnivorous Tussock Moth (*Acyphas semiochrea*) was found and, as we approached the valley grasslands, we had wonderful views of a pair of Satin Flycatchers. Unfortunately, the grasslands and the boggy swamp remained rather quiet for butterflies, with a few more Bright-eyed Browns and only a few Common Grass-blues (*Zizina otis*)



Identifying a butterfly. Photo by Max Lawrence.

flying. To compensate, there was a lovely show of late-flowering alpine plants, including some Magenta Autumn Orchids (*Eriochilus magenteus*), the only orchid species for the walk. Leaving the valley and starting the final leg of the walk back to the cars, a few Shouldered Browns (*Heteronympha penelope*) perched obligingly for the photographers in the group, and a Margined-winged Stick Insect (*Ctenomorpha marginipennis*) made an appearance.

We then returned to the car park and were back at Lanyon Marketplace by about 3:00 pm.

Suzi Bond

¹ Author, with Steve Holliday and John Stein, of *Field Guide to Butterflies of the Australian Capital Territory*, published in 2016 by the National Parks Association of the ACT, available from the association or in bookshops including those at the National Library and the National Botanic Gardens.

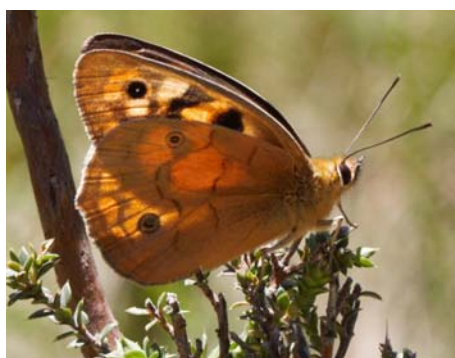
Below left. Shouldered Brown Butterfly.

Below centre. Common Brown Butterfly.

[The difference? Maybe check very closely the spots on the hindwings!]

Below right. Magenta Autumn Orchid.

Photos by Richard Allen.



Mount Stromlo

Date: Sunday, 16 December 2018.

Participants: Brian Slee (leader), Marlene Eggert, Max Lawrence, Michaela Popham, Annette Smith, Tim Walsh.

Weather: Cloudy; dusty atmosphere; mild temps but humid; breeze late morning.

The idea for this walk came to me on a National Arboretum outing while gazing westward from Bold Hill (NPA *Bulletin*, September 2017, p. 25). On a subsequent recce it was found that, close up, Mount Stromlo was a bit of a mess but worth exploring.

The southern car park off Swallowtail (formerly Uriarra) Road was a good place to start, at 8:30 am, as it is adjacent to the 2003 bushfire memorial. Most of Mount Stromlo was burnt at that time so it was a solemn sight under a gloomy sky. The cathartic element, a 'babbling brook' running down from a pond at the memorial's high point, provided no relief as the pump was turned off.

A 'Cyclists Only' sign on the broad path heading north from there to The Village, the centre of Stromlo Forest Park, is indicative of the dominance of bikers. Despite the milling throngs, infrastructure is sparse. Ironically, the first major construction is an Olympic pool, passed as we continued further north to the Opperman Avenue entrance.

Scrambling around temporary fencing, we began gently climbing

Uriarra Road bike path north-west. Noisy Friarbirds gargled their strange tunes; up-market Denman Prospect came into view. The last of several attempts at rainfall faded away – yay, none of us had wet weather gear. After 2 km we turned south at Western Carpark.

Gresham's Law of 'bad maps driving out good' was here exemplified. *Stromlo Trail Map*, the only readily available detailed guide, abandons walkers at this point. It omits the names of major routes, significant buildings and geographic features, instead concentrating on hip names for tricky bike tracks (as on a ski field). So, in the company of ever-polite mountain cyclists, we took North South Link and Forest Trail and eventually diverted onto an old forestry road, keeping west of Stromlo Ridge.

As the road began descending we turned left and scaled a steep track to a domed astronomical building near the summit (782 m). Coffee was at 11 am on the café terrace. A fresh breeze arrived but the Queensland dust persisted, limiting the view.

Faint shadows began accompanying us as we strolled through the neat ANU settlement south of the café. Ruined



Descending Mount Stromlo to the east. Photo by Max Lawrence.

telescope buildings remain. We went too far so there was a brief retreat before we descended steeply east on a jumble of tracks. A Nankeen Kestrel hovered. While the views over Canberra were impressive, the weeds and erosion closer to hand were hard to ignore. Back at car park 12:45 pm. 8 km.

The walk was timed to avoid the heat but, perversely, it was the afternoon that would have provided sparkling skies and ideal conditions. Future walks in cooler months could begin at Western Carpark and further investigate the far side of Stromlo Ridge.

Brian Slee

Swampy Plain River

Date: Wednesday, 29 August 2018.

Participants: Mike Bremers (leader), Margaret Power, Brian Slee, Max Smith.

Weather: Blue sky with crystal-clear air; cold; chilly wind at times.

On day trips aimed at exploring areas beyond Cootapatamba Hut you need to get there early. In 2015, on the way to Kosciuszko South Ridge, Margaret, Max and I descended from the summit track at Etheridge Gap (NPA *Bulletin*, December 2015, p.15). Mike's plan on this walk was to turn sooner, at Kosciuszko Lookout, and head west of North Ramshead to the source of the Snowy River (2,000 m ASL, buried in snow), then descend to Swampy Plain River. This we did and reached the Hut at 10:45 am for an excellent beginning.

We had convened as usual at Calwell at 6:15 am and arrived in Max's Outback at Friday Flat at 8:30, bussed to Kosciuszko Express where the Thredbo

Card actually worked (lift \$39, concession \$21) and were on our way to Eagles Nest. It was cold (minus 14.2°C at Perisher that morning) so we donned everything before setting out on solid snow at 9:20, but soon started shedding.

From the Hut, Victoria's snowy ridges were alluring. With a sense of anticipation we zipped toward them and into country new to us. First stop was Leatherbarrel to gaze at the grizzled might of Ramshead and its contiguous range. Skeletal trees were arranged in patterns below. In *Skiing the Western Faces of Kosciusko*, Alan Andrews describes ski descents of these slopes. Hey, the climb out!



Burnt Snow Gums, Ramshead slope. Photo by Mike Bremers.

Turning west from Leatherbarrel Creek, we shuffled up to the end of the kilometre-long ridge south of Swampy Plain River ('SPR Ridge'), stopping at several 1,900+ m peaks on the way. A field of snow spread west of SPR Ridge,

(continued next page)

Bushwalk reports *(continued)*

adjacent were snow-capped Granuaille (1,420 m) and Youngal (1,516 m). Fifteen-hundred metres below us lay Geehi Valley greenery; lines of blue black hills stretched to the horizon. Like being at Teddys Hut, this was Back Country remoteness. We stayed on the lovely western expanse and had lunch at 12:20 pm, sheltered by a massive granite outcrop. A solo skier came up the slope but it was not Matthew.

On its way from Lake Cootapatamba, Swampy Plain River carves a sinuous line past the Hut but after slipping through the ridge, disorganises the landscape and begins a wild descent to the Geehi. The river and its jumbled surrounds were mostly under snow when we contoured along its southern bank and through the gap – it made a fine sight. From there we followed our outward path, struggling up the hill in still-firm snow and back to the chairlift, arriving 2:45 pm. 15 km.

By way of symmetry, we arrived back at Calwell at 6:15 pm after the



Swampy Plain River heading west. Photo by Brian Slee.

usual reviver in Jindabyne and a brief stop at Bredbo to swap drivers. This snowshoe outing was the last in a series organised by Mike before his departure for Europe. Special thanks for the inspiration and organisation. We look

forward to future forays on to Abbott Ridge and west of Kosciuszko. I can barely wait.

Brian Slee

West Basin, Lake Burley Griffin

Date: Monday, 18 February 2019

Participants: Brian Slee (leader), Peter Anderson-Smith

Weather: Warm, partly cloudy, breezy

NPA's Sunday outings have been attracting small numbers while mid-week walks have been doing well. So I scheduled this walk for a Monday to test the market for an in-between day. Unfortunately, interest was dampened by the forecast maximum of 35°C. Instead of circling the entire western end of Lake Burley Griffin, we restricted ourselves to a section near Commonwealth Avenue Bridge.

We set out from Lotus Bay, Yarralumla, at 9:20 am and spent a while in Lennox Gardens, starting with the Beijing Garden. Its enormous tiled gate and other structures, opened in 2014, have a brassiness that contrasts with the subtlety of the adjacent Japan-inspired Nara Peace Park. Good year for crepe myrtles. Down by the

lake a pair of ducks led a pair of fluffy 'dumplings' across the bike path, confident that traffic would screech to a halt. It did.

Continuing north, we crossed the aforesaid bridge into newly constructed Henry Rolland Park. If properly maintained, it could become a popular meeting place. Hanna Hoyne's 'Crying Dinghy' is an eye-catching piece of art: one can comfortably lie on it, complete with a stone pillow sprouting metal gramophone horns. Contrary to its playful appearance, the accompanying plaque provides a lachrymose explanation for the 'spirit recharge vessel'.

The enterprises that once studded West Basin have mostly gone, pending redevelopment. So it is easy to imagine one is in a remote part of the city as the path continues west to the National Museum. The dirt track next to the

shore is home to a darting herd of water dragons.

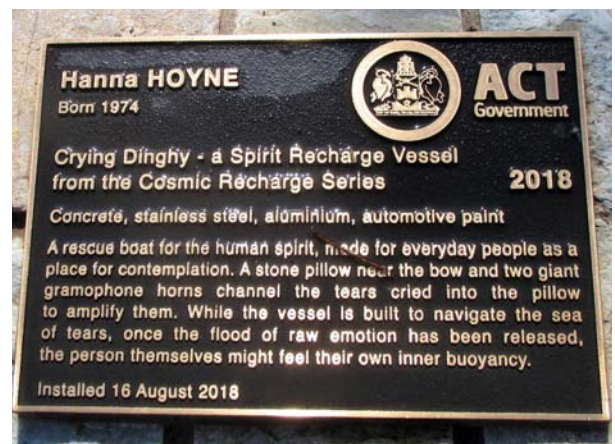
But my thoughts were straying; the Museum Café sells Eccles cakes and I love these stodgy lumps of Lancashire pastry encasing succulent currants. With tea, yum. The café now occupies the lovely space that was once a restaurant.

After our break, and with high cloud flowing in from the west, we walked through the casuarinas on the other side of the peninsula, now blessedly free of parked cars. We checked out the sculptures on the southern border of the ANU before returning via the outward path. Back at the cars at 11:40 am, before the day got hot. 7 km. Good short walk, worth repeating on the longer route during the cooler months.

Brian Slee



*Crying Dinghy.
Photos by
Brian Slee.*



European wasp sightings

If you come across a European Wasp nest when out walking and are able to get its co-ordinates by GPS or smartphone, send the location to the Namadgi National Park Visitor Centre's email address

Namadginationalpark@act.gov.au

or log the location on

<https://ewasp.com.au/ewasp-mobile-app/>

The European Wasp (*Vespula germanica*) is a stout wasp, about 15 mm long, with a bright yellow and black banded abdomen and a pair of black spots on each yellow band. Their legs are yellow and they have two pairs of clear wings with the first pair larger, black antennae and fly with their legs held close to the body. The nest is usually in the ground and may be noticed because of the comings and goings of the inhabitants.



Close-up of the European Wasp.

A wasp trap in Namadgi National Park; wasps attracted to such traps can alert rangers to the presence of a nest in the area.



A Short Walk in the Tuggeranong Bush



Clearing mist, Rob Roy Nature Reserve. Photo by Philip Gatenby.

That decision, so difficult for many people: when to retire? I've enjoyed my working life, mostly. But I have felt stressed in the last year or two: a young thrusting manager; pressure to bring in funding; no time for yoga or bushwalking. I'm ambivalent.

I decide to take some long service leave, and think about it. And to go bushwalking. I venture out on my first Wednesday walk. A dozen of us from the three walking clubs climb up Mount Rob

Roy, at the back of the Tuggeranong suburbs. Coming down the hill I'm engrossed in conversation with D about plans for pack walks. How about I join him for a couple of weeks on the Great North Walk? My foot slips on the steep gravel track, and I'm writhing on the ground. I know it's a sprained or broken ankle.

The group pauses, and the leader rings for a helicopter rescue. But it's lunchtime at the base and the helicopter

is unavailable. The group is disappointed, but I'm glad. I'm in shock and don't fancy being winched up. A Land Rover comes in, cutting through fences, and the ambos give me morphine and take me to the Woden Hospital.

A couple of weeks later, the doctor suggests that I go back to work on crutches. But I don't want to; I need to heal, to look after myself. And I don't go back. I resign from the job. My body has taken over and retired me.

It's twenty years now, and I've done a lot of walking in that time, but not the Great North Walk. And I haven't been back to Mount Rob Roy.

ah ... the ridge
my world is on both sides
behind it
in summer haze
the hills lie waiting

Gerry Jacobson

PARKWATCH

Heritage protection summarily removed

Around Australia conservationists are increasingly aware that past gains in heritage protection are under siege. Unfortunately, in one important case, the move has gone past that stage and heritage protection has been removed. On 21 June 2018 six environmentally significant coastal reserves on Norfolk Island were removed from the Commonwealth Heritage List without any prior public notification and without any opportunity for the public to comment.

The public reserves removed from the List were Anson Bay, Ball Bay, Bumbora, Hundred Acres, Point Ross and Two Chimneys Reserve and Escarpment that had all been added to the Commonwealth Heritage List on 22 June 2004 under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. They were removed from the List on the basis that the land was no longer owned or leased by the Commonwealth. No management plans had been developed under the Commonwealth legislation for any of the delisted reserves.

The heritage significance of these reserves is considerable both in terms of their history and their contribution to the protection of Norfolk Island's flora and fauna. The first major coastal reserve in Australian history was that established by the Norfolk Island Superintendent Lieutenant Philip Gidley King. Explaining his decision for establishing the reserve, King wrote in his diary how some of the settlers had cleared ground near the coast and how it was therefore necessary to forbid any more clearing to 'have considerable space left between them and the sea in order to shelter them from the blighting effects of the Sea Winds'.

The removal of the majority of the public reserves on the Norfolk Island coast from the Commonwealth Heritage List seriously reduces the level of heritage protection available for both the cultural landscape and their nature conservation values. Regardless of the issue of ownership, and whether it can be argued that the Act did not require public consultation for the transfer and delisting, clearly such a significant process should be more transparent.

This issue should be of particular interest to conservationists and history groups in NSW because up until federation in 1901, Norfolk Island was a part of the Colony of NSW. It is also

worth mentioning that the NSW Strategic Framework is now being applied to the long term planning of Norfolk Island.

Nature NSW, Vol. 63, No. 1
(Autumn 2019)

Is it time to make national parks truly national?

We know national parks and conservation areas are popular. Statewide polling commissioned by VNPA in November 2018 showed that around 73 per cent of the community supported a comprehensive network of national parks and conservation areas across land and sea. Of these, 37 per cent 'strongly supported' and 36 per cent 'supported'. A further 14 per cent were 'undecided' and 5 per cent 'strongly opposed'. So you would think with these high levels of support it should be an opportunity for politicians of any party or jurisdiction to talk about something different and positive to a fairly jaded electorate.

The Australian Government manages and provides funding for national parks in territories and offshore – so places like Kakadu, Uluru, and the Great Barrier Reef are responsibilities of the Commonwealth, though some parts may be joint managed with territories, adjoining states and Traditional Owners. National parks in the states are state responsibilities, though areas with World Heritage or National Heritage status may get financial support, and some national oversight in limited cases. Roughly 70 per cent of national parks and other publicly-owned protected areas in Australia are in the states.

So while they are called National Parks, they are really creatures and creations of state government. However, the federal government has signed up to the *International Convention on Biological Diversity*, which does give it a legal role in oversight and support for management of national parks and conservation areas. We are not talking about some sort of 'take over' from the federal government of state territory here, because that is unrealistic and likely counterproductive; but rather the legitimate role of the Australian Government to help manage our unique natural heritage on behalf of all of us. Essentially, the logic goes, the Australian Government has international obligations to protect the integrity of national parks – but what

can it do if a state government goes feral and wants to damage, develop or destroy national parks? To date, not much.

VNPA and other national parks associations around the country, as well as community conservation groups, have developed a package of policy proposals through the National Parks Australia Council (NPAC) which explore the options and opportunities for the Australian Government to ensure our national natural heritage estate is protected.

NPAC has produced a series of background briefings and discussion papers on some of these key areas. They include:

- National parks – a matter of national significance
- Maintain the values of the national reserve system
- Completing Australia's national reserve system
- Enhancing landscape connectivity
- Marine protected areas.

They can be viewed on www.vnpa.org.au/npac

Park Watch (VNPA), No. 276
(March 2019)

Singleton Army Base brumby cull

The protests that arose over the RSPCA-approved, humane aerial cull of feral horses at Singleton Army Base again reveals the extent to which public concern for animal welfare is used to twist public sentiment into opposition. Pro-brumby activists have called this aerial cull of feral horses barbaric. Yet these horses lived with the real and constant threat of live bombing, shooting and unexploded ordnance. Anecdotal evidence from past national parks rangers who worked in the Hunter region point to the dire plight that these feral animals faced. Horses were witnessed living with wounds/injuries from shrapnel, and in some cases missing a leg from explosives.

A media release from the Defence Department on the issue of the Singleton Army Base aerial cull claimed 'the feral horses habitually live in an area where live firing takes place and where there is unexploded ordnance'. These animals have been suffering awfully cruel and painful existences, but the ideological and political goals of brumby support groups sought to limit an outcome that would result in the least amount of animal suffering. Claiming the aerial cull of these horses is inhumane, and

(continued on page 28)

PARKWATCH (continued)

the wrong course of action, is false. Feral animals shouldn't be living in these areas, particularly when survival difficulties were compounded by the recent drought which has gripped the Hunter region. The horses were putting themselves and soldiers using this area in harms' way.

These appear to be anti-national parks views that seem to be a growing part of the National's policy platform, which is also evident in the debate around feral horses in the Snowy Mountains and the passing of the Heritage Horse legislation. There is also a contradictory aspect to the brumby argument. On one hand, there is a sentiment that feral horses should be left to their own devices, with activists claiming that suffering of these animals in the Snowy during the period of drought in 2018 should be met with no response. This is claimed to be all in the name of 'natural processes'. On the other hand, in Barmah on the Murray River and Singleton, pro-brumby groups called for intervention. This was portrayed in reports of activists illegally feeding the feral horses in Barmah National Park, as well as just outside the park. If this is the only way to maintain their health, then it is clear these animals are not suited to living 'wild' in national parks.

The key alternative proposed to the aerial cull in Singleton, rehoming, can only account for small numbers successfully removed and rehomed. Given the nature of where these feral horses live, this was never a viable option. As outlined by Defence:

'In 2014, the Department of Defence undertook a trial to capture and re-home a number of the feral horses in the area. The trial was unsuccessful due to the trauma and stress suffered by the horses as a result of exposure from the live fire and bombing activities on the range. This trauma makes the horses more difficult to train in an attempt to re-home them.' (Defence Department, 2018).

Re-homing is presented as a political 'solution' acceptable to brumby supporters. It is a distraction which the public then latches onto in the belief there are viable alternatives to aerial culling. Feral horses on an army base can't be mustered. It's unsafe. Immuno-contraception is another alternative suggested. Horses live long lives following sterilisation, meaning they will still suffer in drought conditions, destroy the environment and potentially come into harm's way on a live firing range. These alternatives aren't real solutions.

Colong Bulletin, No. 274
(February 2019)

21st century wilderness

Wilderness must become a key conservation debate as the threat of climate change shall bring a greater nature conservation focus to reserve management so that wildlife survives. In recent years, a wilderness 'purity' debate has become a proxy for competing demands such as resource development, vehicle access and horse riding and has led to all sorts of compromises. Setting aside wilderness from development and exploitation, and managing these lands for nature conservation, as legislation intends, should ensure optimal outcomes for wildlife.

Unfortunately, political decisions have resulted in areas excised for logging and mining and easements retained for off-road vehicle use. Despite this, for the last 20 years, protected wilderness in NSW has been relatively safe from further assault, apart from recent incursions by horse riders. However, as we have seen with several recent tourism development proposals in South West Tasmania, we cannot be complacent. Wilderness is important. It is the only place where we can physically escape our highly structured and rapacious growth-based society.

Recreation is only one benefit that wilderness brings – we can't afford to disregard its intrinsic values – maintenance of wildlife, safeguarding threatened species, catchment protection and scientific research are just as important. The goal of wilderness management, however tempting, is not to freeze national parks in some sort of imagined historical fidelity of arcadia. Maintenance of ecological diversity must be sought by science and secured by effective, adequately funded reserve management. To avoid widespread degradation, human intervention must come with a light touch.

With regard to fire management, no simple prescriptions or formulae such as 'five per cent of the state must be burnt a year' will deliver good conservation outcomes. If a wilderness hasn't been burnt for 30 years, managers may perhaps let a wildfire burn, or they may put it out as soon as possible, when it threatens a mega-fire or ecological catastrophe. One thing for sure, effective management is not as easy as tossing incendiaries out of a helicopter window – detailed knowledge of ecosystems, historical records of fire frequency and intensity are required. The reality is that there must be limited selective intervention.

The first priority is to think. What are the key biological vulnerabilities for rare

and special habitats sensitive to climate-driven disturbance, like swamps suffering intense drought? Better not burn a swamp if it destroys its dry peaty soils developed over millennia. Fire management must protect remnant old growth, not only forest types but all ancient vegetation types, including older shrub lands. Wildlife requires an age class diverse habitat to thrive. The historical range of growth stage variability may prove a poor model of sustainability in the face of climate change, but it remains the only model we have of the dynamics of the environment that has sustained the ecosystems we now have.

Sustaining whole collections of ecosystems in wilderness and pushing back against the effects of climate change may ultimately prove a management impossibility, but it will buy nature time. Management of fire-prone ecosystems must ensure these environments are more resistant to drastic change. Resilience thinking must be based on ecosystem health and function, and ultimately comes back to wilderness. Like all species, we evolved within nature, we belong to nature and without it we might as well be dead, so we'd better get wilderness management right. We are still learning these skills. If we can retain wilderness for a thousand years, and truly learn to read the landscape, listen to it and respect it – our Indigenous brothers and sisters have much to teach us here – we might, with humility, survive.

Colong Bulletin, No. 274
(February 2019)

Burning forests worse than burning coal

The Australian Forests and Climate Alliance recently advised that 'we are at the point where emissions reductions alone cannot meet our climate goals and we must also draw carbon back out of the atmosphere.' Natural forests do this very well but 'Forest protection and stopping land clearing are not substitutes for radical reductions in society's carbon emissions'.

Ecologically sustainable sources of electricity do not emit greenhouse gases or threaten biodiversity. Burning forests is promoted as a means of reducing logging waste, but production of native forest waste will drive higher logging rates, just like clear-fell logging arose from the production of woodchips. Burning forests creates a carbon debt that will not be repaid by regrowth forests for decades, if ever, as inputs of

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PARKWATCH (continued)

fossil fuels through tree felling, haulage and processing are not adequately factored into the carbon equation. Carbon retention in native forests is maximised when they are not logged.

An Australian National University 'Green Carbon' research report highlights that Australia's natural eucalypt forests store more carbon and are more resistant to the impacts of climate change than plantation forests. The logging of natural forests results in three times more carbon dioxide emissions than previously estimated, and if left to regrow, natural eucalypt forests would remove an amount of CO₂ from the atmosphere each year equivalent to 24% of Australia's total greenhouse gas emissions in 2005 (B.G. Mackey et al., 2008, *Green Carbon: the Role of Natural Forests in Carbon Storage*, ANU Press). The coal industry promotes carbon capture and storage technology where CO₂ is liquefied and pumped at high pressure over two kilometres underground with considerable energy expense.

Currently there's virtually no take up of this technology by the world's fossil-fuelled power stations. Plants, however, pull carbon out of the atmosphere at a much greater scale – expansion of forest plantations is a proven method to do just this. Done well it also produces wood products, good jobs and profits. Protecting natural forests and expanding forest plantations are an integral part of an ecologically sustainable solution to climate change. It will buy us time while we reduce emissions from other sectors of the economy.

Colong Bulletin, No. 274
(February 2019)

The impacts of commercial walks in national parks

Multi-day walks in national parks are becoming increasingly sought after – especially commercial 'supported' walks run by private contractors. Walkers carry only a day or light pack, as accommodation and food are typically



provided, as well as guides. Two such walks are presented as examples to illustrate diverse models of such walks, with noticeable impacts and experience.

• *Three Capes Walk, Tasmania*

The commercially operated Three Capes walk along Tasmania's remote and scenic south-east coast has only been available since late 2018, offering a walk for groups capped at 14 people. Accommodation is in well-designed cabins, with 2-bed rooms offering clean sheets and comfortable bedding. Cabins are not visible from the main track and public walkers would not be aware of their presence. Grey water is filtered and discharged. All toilet waste is collected in sealed containers. The accommodation is serviced by helicopters for all maintenance, including food. The noise and disturbance from helicopter trips would negatively impact on the hiking experience for all.

Although the cabin design is low impact, the standard borders on 'luxury', with a plunge pool and massage service. Food and alcohol were also of a very high standard. Although such comforts are welcomed by many, they are not necessary to appreciate the natural values and landscape. This also has the impact of placing the walk into a higher price bracket which would make it unaffordable for some.

• *Larapinta Trail, Northern Territory*

Located west from Alice Springs, the iconic 223 km Larapinta Trail traverses some of Australia's most spectacular inland topography. Although the whole trail takes around 16 days to walk, commercial operators offer shorter versions of the most spectacular sections. A 6-day walk was based in a campsite located in the sandy bed of the Finke River just outside the national park boundary. The base campsite was temporary with no permanent structures, and is removed before the wet season sets in and the rivers run high. A small bus was used to transport walkers to the start and finish of each days walk.

An impressive feature was the effort taken to ensure a low impact of the site. All waste was sorted. Toilet arrangements were interesting. The motto was 'every tree is a lavatree', and people were encouraged to urinate in the bush surrounding the camp into the sandy river soil, which is flooded in the summer wet season.

Cape Pillar, Three Capes Walk.
Photo by Philip Gatenby.

Toilets were lined with plastic bags and all toilet waste was bagged to be removed from site and composted.

Water is scarce and was supplied by two 3,000 L tanks. Its use was tightly managed; a small tin was supplied to wash hands after toileting and showering was a splash down from a small bowl. Beds were swags in a tent, although many opted to put their swags in the river bed to experience the amazing night sky. All power for the fridge and lights was generated through portable solar cells. There was no dining room, but seats around an open fire, with wood brought in. No vegetation was cleared around the camp area. The group was capped at 8 people. An explanation of Indigenous values and connections to country was given by a local Aboriginal woman at the start of the walk.

Both walks used guides, who also prepared meals. The tendency for guides to place themselves at the front and back of the group also means you walk as a 'pack'. However, on both walks, a strong low impact culture was set by the guides, with a clear explanation and continued reinforcement of appropriate behaviour while on the walk.

In summary, it is clear that commercial walks can be designed and managed for low impact, particularly around the behaviour of walkers, and the location, design and servicing of accommodation. They do play a role in making such walks accessible to more people. However, an emerging issue is for commercial walks to increasingly pitch more toward the luxury end of the ecotourism market. This means a higher level of servicing (extra traffic), plus making it unaffordable for some. An equity issue arises about having such facilities on publicly-funded national parks which, in principle, are accessible to all. It also, of course, may compromise the cardinal principle of national park management.

Protected (NPAQ),
Issue 24 (Autumn 2019)

Compiled by Hazel Rath

We are looking for new members

If you receive a printed copy of the *Bulletin* you will also receive a copy of the NPA brochure. Please pass it on to a friend or acquaintance who might be interested in our activities and possibly join our association. Thank you.

NPA notices



National Parks Association Calendar

	June	July	August	September
Public holidays	Mon 10	—	—	—
General meetings	Thurs 20	Thurs 18	Thurs 15 ¹	Thurs 19
Committee meetings	Tues 4	Tues 2	Tues 6	Tues 3
Gudgeny Bush Regeneration ²	Sat 8	—	Sat 10	Sat 14

Further details: **1** Annual General Meeting; see notice page 2.
2 GBRG. Meet at Namadgi Visitor Centre 9:00 am. Note there is no work party scheduled in July.

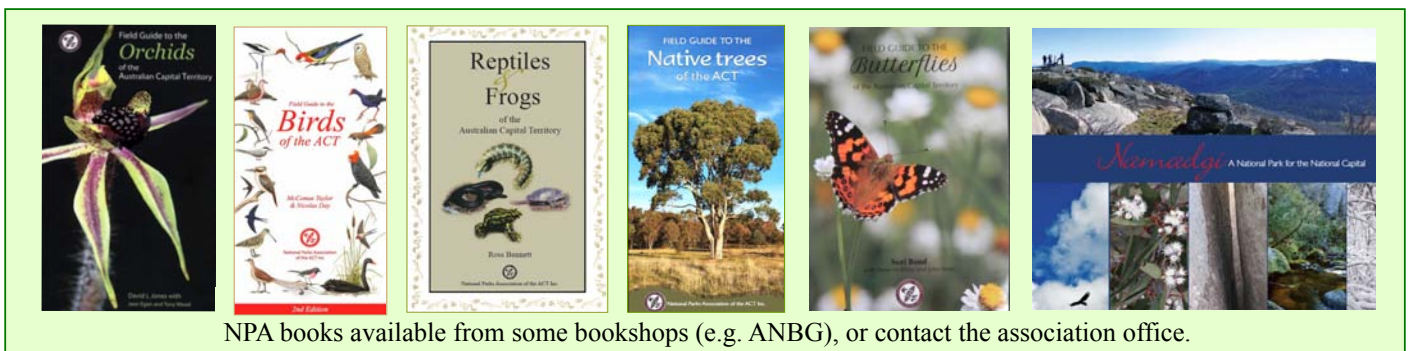
The NPA welcomes the following new members
 Valerie Oliver (re-joining member)
 We look forward to seeing you at NPA activities.

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

Volunteers needed

We always need new volunteers to take over from members who have volunteered for a long time and need a break. Please consider putting your name forward for any jobs you think you can spend some time on for the good of NPA. It can be to help organise events for our 60th anniversary, setting up the meeting room or the supper for our general meetings, selling our books at public events or helping with office work.

If you can help please send an email to admin@npaact.org.au or leave a message on the office phone (02) 6229 3201.



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

Membership fees are due at the end of June

All members will be receiving a letter for membership renewal and donations in June, either as a digital document (if we have your email address) or as a printed copy through Australia Post.

The letter shows the data we store confidentially on our membership database about you. Please check the information and amend your details if necessary; send the whole form with your membership dues (and donation if possible) back to the office by post together with cheques or money orders. The completed form can also be scanned and sent to admin@npaact.org.au by email.

You can also pay on-line by bank transfer or by using the payment facility on 'Trybooking' – your letter contains detailed instructions. Please still send the completed form back to the office with an indication of payment method after paying on-line.

Thank you for your cooperation.
 Sonja Lenz, Secretary



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 31).

Deadline for the September 2019 issue: 31 July 2019.

Cover photographs

Front cover

Main photo. Illawong Bridge, Kosciuszko National Park. Photo by Mike Bremers.

Insets. Left. A Yerrabi butterfly (see walk report page 23). Photo by Max Lawrence.

Centre. Narjong Water Healing ceremony (see article page 7). Photo by Cynthia Burton.

Right. Members forum. (see article page 4). Photo by Rod Griffiths.

Back cover

Top. Cime Campestrini and Pizes de Furcia Rossa, Dolomites. (see page 19) Photo by Jan Gatenby.

Bottom. Waterfall, headwaters of Nursery Creek. Photo by Barrie Ridgway.

General Meetings

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



Thursday 20 June

Art Weeks at Gudgenby Cottage

Adrienne Nicholson

NPA ACT Member

Together with Hazel Rath, and previously Christine Goonrey, Adrienne has for many years organised *Art Weeks at Gudgenby Cottage* for NPA members. Not all members consider themselves artistic, but some have been surprised at their abilities to appreciate an overnight stay, or just a day visit, to this NPA 'outing'. Adrienne will illustrate participant's activities and some of the products of Art Weeks over the years. There will be some works on display.

Thursday 18 July

Hiking and paddling the Upper Murray

Mike Bremers

NPA Member and Bushwalk Leader

The upper 150 km of the Murray River flows through diverse environments ranging from the very remote and inaccessible parts within Kosciuszko National Park to dairy farms. Mike and colleagues hiked the top 150 km in 2013 and then hiked/paddled it again in 2017. Mike will talk about these adventurous journeys and explain how the river environment changes as one travels down it.

Thursday 15 August

Annual General Meeting

followed by

Members' reminiscences

Members are encouraged to offer a 5 minute talk on a topic of interest to other members (please notify Kevin McCue beforehand), following which we will share a supper provided by members, so bring a plate – sandwiches, scones or cakes. Bring your friends as well.

National Parks Association of the ACT Incorporated

Inaugurated 1960

Aims and objectives of the Association

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

Office-bearers

<i>President</i>	Esther Gallant	6161 4514 (h)
	galla001@umn.edu	
<i>Vice President</i>	Cynthia Burton	0488 071 203
	cynthia.burton69@bigpond.com	
<i>Secretary</i>	Sonja Lenz	6251 1291 (h)
	sonjalenz67@gmail.com	
<i>Treasurer</i>	Hannah Conway	0439 962 255
	hannah_conway21@hotmail.com	

Committee members

Chris Emery	6249 7604 (h)
	chris.emery@optusnet.com.au
Steven Forst	0428 195 236
	steven.forst@inet.net.au
Rod Griffiths	(Immediate Past President) 0410 875 731
	rod.blackdog@gmail.com
George Heinsohn	6278 6655 (h)
	george.heinsohn@gmail.com
Kevin McCue	6251 1291 (h)
	mccue.kevin@gmail.com

Conveners

<i>Bulletin Working Group</i>	Kevin McCue	6251 1291 (h)
	mccue.kevin@gmail.com	
<i>Cultural Subcommittee</i>	Quentin Moran	6288 9840
	qmoran@webone.com.au	
<i>Environment Subcommittee</i>	Rod Griffiths	0410 875 731
	rod.blackdog@gmail.com	
<i>Outings Subcommittee</i>	Steven Forst	0428 195 236
	steven.forst@inet.net.au	
<i>Publications Subcommittee</i>	Kevin McCue	6251 1291 (h)
	mccue.kevin@gmail.com	
<i>Publicity Subcommittee</i>	Allan Sharp	
	sharpaw4@gmail.com	
<i>60th Anniversary Subcommittee</i>	Cynthia Burton	0488 071 203
	cynthia.burton69@bigpond.com	
<i>Work Party Co-ordinator</i>	Martin Chalk	6292 3502 (h)
	mchalk1@bigpond.com	

The NPA ACT office is in Unit 14 Lena Karmel Lodge, 26 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.

Phone: (02) 6229 3201 or 0429 356 212 (if urgent)

Website: www.npaact.org.au

Email: admin@npaact.org.au

Address: GPO Box 544, Canberra ACT 2601

Facebook:

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

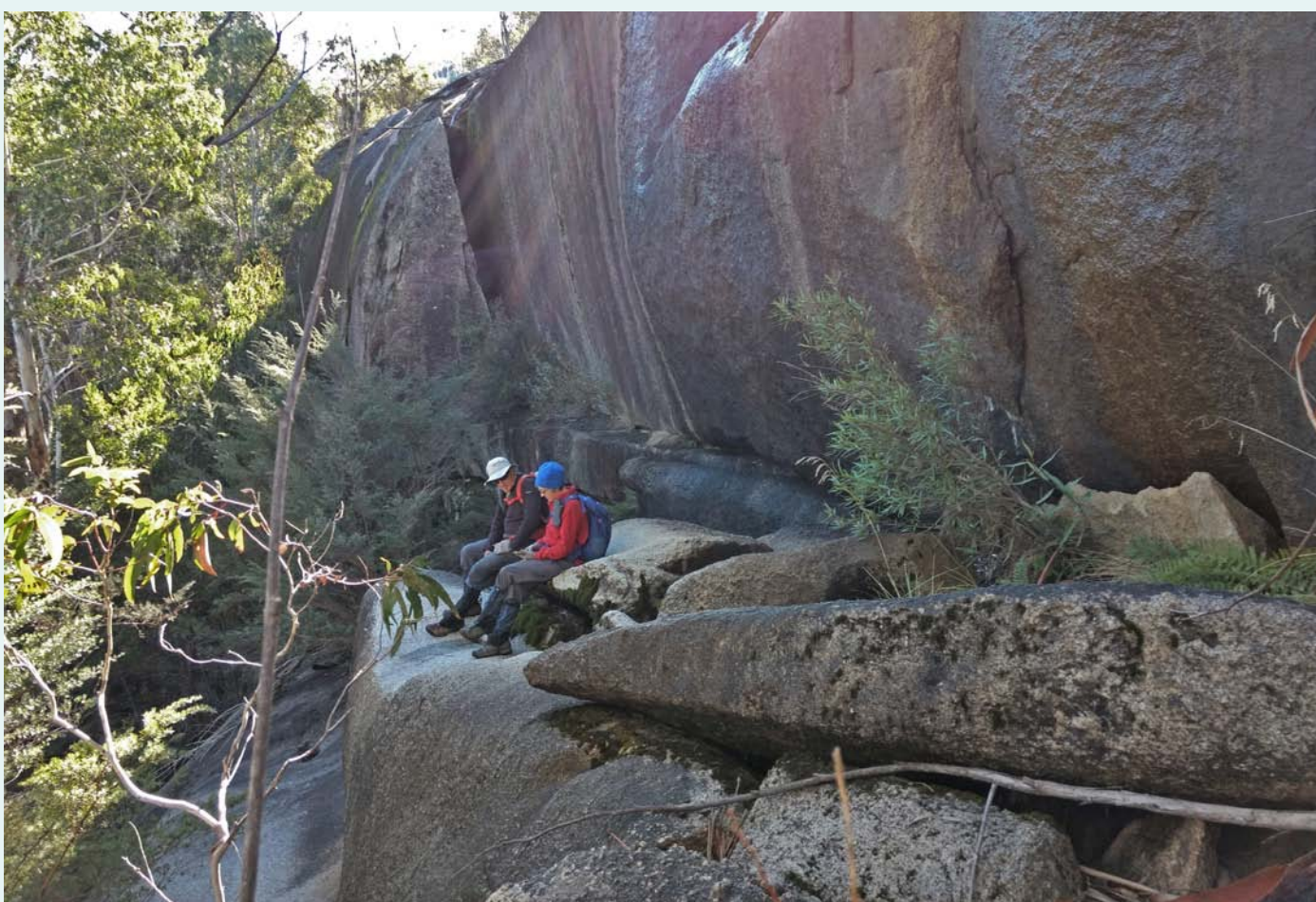
Note: All the above subscription categories reduce to \$11 if a donation of \$100 or more is made.

Advertising

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Printed by Instant Colour Press, Belconnen, ACT.

ISSN 0727-8837 (printed copy); ISSN 2209-6256 (digital copy).



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