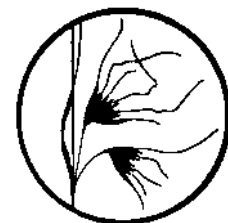


Friends of Grasslands

Supporting native grassy ecosystems



Friends of Grasslands 2015 Annual Reports Prepared for the Annual General Meeting, 15 March 2016 Conservation Council Offices, Lena Karmel Lodge, Barry Drive Acton

Contents

PRESIDENT'S REPORT (Sarah Sharp).....	2
SECRETARY'S REPORT (John Fitz Gerald).....	3
TREASURER'S REPORT, 2015 FINANCIAL YEAR (Leon Pietsch)	3
Sales (Sarah Sharp)	10
MEMBERSHIP (Isobel Crawford).....	10
ADVOCACY.....	10
Advocacy Group (Naarilla Hirsch).....	10
Conservation Council Biodiversity Working Group (Sarah Sharp and Tony Lawson).....	11
Bush on the Boundary	11
Molonglo (Sarah Sharp).....	11
West Belconnen (Barbara Payne).....	11
Kosciusko to Coast (John Fitz Gerald).....	12
ACTIVITIES.....	12
Activities Program (David Crawford, Margaret Ning, Paul Archer, Ann Milligan).....	12
National Capital Authority projects (Jamie Pittock)	13
Hall Cemetery (John Fitz Gerald).....	14
Cooma Grassland project (Margaret Ning)	14
Scottsdale Monitoring (Linda Spinaze).....	15
COMMUNICATION.....	15
Website (Richard Bomford).....	15
Newsletter (Ann Milligan, editor).....	15
e-Bulletin (Ann Milligan, editor)	16
Other publications.....	16
Proceedings of the 2014 Forum (Ann Milligan).....	16
Woodland Flora (Sarah Sharp)	16

PRESIDENT'S REPORT (Sarah Sharp)

After such a busy year in 2014, when we celebrated our 20 years of advocating for grasslands and other grassy ecosystems, 2015 was somewhat more 'normal' – running activities for members and others, advocating, undertaking on-ground work, publishing newsletters and occasional larger publications and working with other groups and government. How much has been achieved is reflected in this report. The FOG committee and other members of FOG provide amazing support, encouragement and passion, resulting in a most successful and well-respected volunteer organisation.

Out of all that has happened, the following items from 2015 stand out for me.

The five members of the Activities Group organised some spectacularly successful activities this year, with an increase in the number of activities and range of activities, resulting in a large increase in the number of attendees, and we gained new members. Well done, Activities group.

With the adoption of the North Gungahlin Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), the FOG advocacy group were not having to provide input into many small development proposals, having earlier been involved in discussions with government during the preparation of the SEA. The effectiveness of this approach in providing long-term outcomes for conservation is still to be determined, but it does appear to be a better way of planning and implementing conservation in the urban context, with a much more efficient use of community and government resources, and more assured outcomes for conservation. Nevertheless the on-going and continual loss and degradation of areas of grassland and woodland is of real concern, and there is no clear message whether the role of offsetting is at all effective in slowing down that loss.

Two major pieces of work were published this year. Ann Milligan, with extensive help from Helen Horton (Naarilla Hirsch's mother) edited the transcribed talks and presentations from the 2014 FOG forum. These papers are an extremely important record of the state of the art of grassy ecosystem conservation, and I recommend wholeheartedly that you take a good look at them. We decided that it would be prohibitively expensive to produce multiple copies, and, with the excellent access provided by internet, people can access them individually as they wish from our website and download the entire proceedings or parts of them, as they require. The other publication was of course, the long-awaited Woodland Flora, published just before Christmas (more below).

As always our relationships with other community groups and government and non-organisations is very effective and mutually beneficial, whether it is to advance on-ground achievements, share knowledge, share the work-load of preparing submissions or provide input into policy or programs. Personally a highlight in this year has been the opportunity to work with Molonglo Catchment Group and the Buru Ngunawal Aboriginal Corporation and others on the enhancement of the condition of the inadequately named Block 2 Section 128 Yarralumla woodland. I have felt very privileged to be in a position to learn and absorb so much more about Aboriginal custodianship, and to be involved in this project. FOG is enhanced by this opportunity to work as a partner in this project, in which Indigenous management is the pivotal point around which the on-ground work and advocacy occurs.

I am standing down as President of FOG this year, having held this position for three years. It has been an extremely interesting experience, requiring me to step well out of my comfort zone, but I feel very fortunate to have been so involved in many projects and to see FOG move forever onwards, as it evolves with time and issues change, whilst retaining its strengths and integrity that have always been a major feature of the organisation. I am very grateful for all the amazing support from committee members and others, as well as the encouragement and involvement of other FOG members and associated community groups, with special thanks to my husband Phil, for his patience and support and help over the last year in particular. I will be staying on the Committee, and will continue to provide support and assistance as required.

SECRETARY'S REPORT (John Fitz Gerald)

During 2015, the FOG secretary's role continued to be successfully shared among a small group of committee members and continues to simplify the approach to the secretarial duties.

Correspondence was received and sent mostly by email, but the PO Box continues to be an important way for FOG to be contacted. All items of mail, incoming and outgoing, continue to be stored electronically using Dropbox.

Throughout the year, over 170 items of incoming correspondence and 20 of outgoing were filed. Perhaps the most significant relate to FOG's constitutional revisions as approved by last year's AGM and the consequent acceptance of FOG's application for Deductible Recipient Status. FOG has not received advice of the outcome as yet.

TREASURER'S REPORT, 2015 FINANCIAL YEAR (Leon Pietsch)

Introduction

FOG has traditionally maintained two sets of accounts, each with its own bank account. The Publication Account covers the production and distribution of publications, and the General Account covers all other FOG activities. The General Account has been split into four sub-accounts to help manage and monitor several distinct FOG activities, but they still all operate using the same bank account. The sub-accounts are the Working Sub-account, the Grants Sub-account, the Investment Fund Sub-account, and the Forum Sub-account.

A third bank account, for the "Friends of Grasslands' Public Fund", was opened this year as a vehicle for tax-deductible donations to be made to FOG. However, the Fund is not yet operational as it does not yet have Government approval, and therefore no financial report has been prepared for it.

As previously, the accounts are presented on an accruals basis, rather than a cash basis. See the note at the end of this report for more explanation.

The 2015 accounts have been audited and accepted by Pauline Hore JP (ACT), BEc, CPA.

General account

Working Sub-account

Membership subscriptions are the main income source for the Working Sub-account (\$4,620 out of a total \$5,609), with newsletter and administration costs being the largest area of expenditure (\$2,381 out of a total \$6,568). There was also a significant transfer (\$2,246) to the Grants Sub-account to cover the 2014 and 2015 GST shortfall between ACT Government grant receipts and FOG expenditure incurred fulfilling the grant obligations. This is discussed further under the Grants Sub-account section below.

There was a deficit of \$960 for the year for the Working Sub-account, compared to a \$299 deficit in 2014. As a result, as shown in the balance sheet, the accumulated funds of the Working Sub-account fell from \$13,973 at the start of the year to \$13,014 at the end.

The main reason for the deficit is the recognition that the GST shortfall associated with the ACT Government grant receipts needs to be financed from outside the Grants Sub-account, and the transfer of \$2,246 from the Working Sub-account shown in this year's accounts covers the deficit for both 2014 and 2015.

Grants Sub-account

The Grants Sub-account records the income provided to FOG through grants for undertaking specific activities as agreed between FOG and the agencies making the grants. Grant income does not necessarily come evenly across years, and is not necessarily spent in the year that it is received. Therefore the Grants Sub-account can show considerable volatility.

In 2015, no funds were received from the two main traditional sources of grant income, the NCA and Environment and Planning in the ACT Government. However, funds had been received from them at the end of 2014 and further funds are expected in early 2016. Expenditure of grant income in 2015, totalling \$10,486, all related to NCA and Environment and Planning Grants received at the end of 2014.

Funds received through grants from Environment and Planning in the ACT Government do not cover the GST component of purchases that FOG makes under the grant agreement. Therefore FOG has to make up the shortfall from its own funds, amounting to \$2,246 in 2014 and 2015. This is shown in the accounts as income received from the Working Sub-account.

\$14,500 was received at the end of 2015 from Local Land Services in the NSW Government to carry out work in the Cooma area, including Old Cooma Common. In total, funds in the Grants Sub-account increased by \$6,260 over 2015, leaving \$20,636 accumulated funds at the end of the year.

Investment Fund Sub-account

The Investment Fund Sub-account has been established to make contributions to major projects undertaken by land-holders to protect or improve grasslands. The aim is to have a fund that it is self-sustaining and able to provide \$1,000 a year to a selected project. The Fund's income comprises interest payments from fixed term deposits held in the General Account, and any general donations to FOG.

In 2015, the Investment Fund made a payment of \$1,000 to the Cooma-Monaro Shire Council for work at Old Cooma Common. The value of the Fund at the start of the year equalled \$10,608, and income happened to equal exactly \$1,000. With a payment of \$1,000 and a transfer of \$10 to the Friends of Grasslands' Public Fund, the Fund closed the year with \$10,597.

Forum Sub-account

A separate sub-account was created to help manage the FOG Forum in 2014. There was still \$6,996 in the Sub-account at the start of 2015. The production of Forum proceedings during 2015 cost \$5,293, and with the payment of some other smaller expenses, the Forum Sub-account ended the year with \$911. The sub-account can now be closed and the remaining funds redirected.

General Account summary

In total, the General Account received \$23,354 in income and had expenditure of \$24,150, leaving a deficit of \$795. General Account assets decreased by the same amount, to \$45,158 at the end of the year. As shown in the balance sheet, most of this is in the form of bank deposits (\$33,544) and \$14,500 grant money invoiced but not yet received from the NSW Government.

Members sometimes want to know the value of FOG's "uncommitted" funds. In the General Account, the committed funds are those funds in the Grants Sub-account. Of the \$45,158 in the General Account, \$20,636 come from the Grants Sub-account, leaving "uncommitted" funds of \$24,522.

The \$795 deficit in 2015 compares to a surplus of \$3,008 in 2014. But the 2014 figure included a surplus of nearly \$7,000 in the Forum Sub-account, since all revenue from the Forum was generated in 2014 but the cost of producing the proceedings was only met in 2015.

Publications Account

As reported elsewhere, the completion and launch of Woodland Flora was a major achievement in 2015. Authoring and manuscript preparation costs totalled \$26,020 and were covered by the Woodland Flora grant funding previously provided, of which \$7,932 remained at the end of the year. There was also \$10,439 remaining of the Grassland Flora grant funding.

Even though Woodland Flora was only released in mid-December, sales of the publication equalled \$3,926 by the end of the year. After netting off the cost of printing publications sold, the net value of all publication sales was \$1,669 and total income for the Publications Account was \$2,362. Thirty three copies of Woodland Flora (worth \$493) were given to people who donated photos or made similar contributions. Postage and handling costs for distributing all publications totalled \$1,638.

At the end of the year, there was \$38,272 in total accumulated funds in the Publication Account, including \$18,371 remaining from the Woodland Flora and Grassland Flora grants. The Publications Account end-year assets were mostly held as bank deposits (\$20,600) and book stocks (\$16,691).

Note on accrual accounting

Under accrual accounting, income and expenditure are mostly recorded when an agreement to a transaction takes place rather than when actual payment occurs. For example, the value of invoices issued by FOG (or received by FOG) in 2015 but not yet paid by the end of the year are included in income (or expenditure). Because the income to be received by FOG had not yet entered the FOG bank account, the amount to be received is included as an end-year asset in the balance sheet item "accounts receivable". Similarly, payments owed by FOG had not yet resulted in a decrease in the FOG bank account, but are included as the end-year liability item "payments pending".

Expenditure on the purchase of equipment such as a chain saw is not included as expenditure in the income and expenditure account, but is recorded as a decrease in bank deposit assets with a corresponding increase in depreciable equipment assets. However, depreciation on such equipment assets is included as an expenditure item in the income and expenditure account. (Annual depreciation has been set at 20 per cent of the purchase price.) Similarly, the purchase of stocks of books such as Woodland Flora is not counted as expenditure in the income and expenditure account, but as an increase in book stocks. When books are sold, the amount FOG paid for those books is called "cost of goods sold" and subtracted from the value of gross sales. Only the net value is counted as income. At the same time, the value of book stocks is decreased by the cost of the goods sold.

Apology

My apologies for not being able to attend this year's FOG AGM and answer any questions in person.

FOG GENERAL ACCOUNT - INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2015

	2015		2014		Note
WORKING SUB-ACCOUNT					
Income					
Membership	2014			2,325	
	2015	2,520		1,100	
	2016	1,755		415	
	2017+	345	4,620	3,840	
Tickets for Anniversary Dinner				1,440	
Payments for bettong walk in Mulligans Flat		666			
Administrative component of grant funding				600	
Merchandise sales	<i>Sale income</i>	173		283	
	<i>Less Cost of goods sold</i>	(7)	166	65	
Other		157	5,609	230	6,175
Expenditure					
Newsletter and postage		1,419		2,062	
Administration	<i>Lock-up rent</i>	291		567	1
	<i>Insurance</i>	400		400	
	<i>PO Box rent</i>	172		163	
	<i>Other</i>	99	962	1,261	
Membership of other organisations		195		471	2
Donations to other organisations		345			
Catering for Anniversary Dinner				1,732	
Cost of bettong walk in Mulligans Flat		666			
FOG contribution to ACT Govt grant work for GST		2,246			3
Depreciation of equipment		262		262	
Other		474	6,568	686	6,474
Surplus (Deficit)			(960)	(299)	
GRANTS SUB-ACCOUNT					
Income					
NCA grants		0		12,000	4
Environment and Planning, ACT Govt Grant		0		6,000	4
Transfer from Working Sub-account to cover GST on ACT Govt grant expenditure		2,246	2,246	6,000	3
NSW Govt		14,500	16,746	4,000	22,000
Expenditure					
NCA grants		6,542		4,209	
Environment and Planning, ACT Govt		3,944		18,087	
NSW Govt		0	10,486	4,000	26,296
Surplus (Deficit)					
NCA grants		(6,542)		7,791	
Environment and Planning, ACT Govt		(1,698)		(12,087)	
NSW Govt		14,500	6,260	0	(4,296)

Notes:

- 1 2015 payment for Lock-up was for 6 months only
- 2 2014 included a 3 year subscription to ANPC
- 3 Because FOG is not registered for GST, the ACT Govt has not been reimbursing us for the GST component that we have paid in meeting costs incurred when fulfilling our obligations under the ACT Govt grant arrangements. It therefore had to be recovered from FOG general funds. The transfer shown here relates to the grants received for activity in both 2014 and 2015.
- 4 Grant payments for 2015 activity were received in December 2014

FOG GENERAL ACCOUNT - INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2015 (continued)

	2015		2014		Note
INVESTMENT FUND SUB-ACCOUNT					
Income					
Interest on fixed deposits	454		501		
Bequest	0		500		
Other donations	<u>546</u>	1,000	<u>607</u>	1,608	
Expenditure					
Spraying at "Poplars"			1,000		
Cooma-Monaro Council for work at Old Cooma Common	1,000				
Deposit into "Friends of Grasslands' Public Fund"	<u>10</u>	1,010	<u> </u>	1,000	1
Surplus (Deficit)		(11)		608	
FORUM SUB-ACCOUNT					
Income					
Ticket sales			20,644		
Sponsorship	<i>Greening Aust</i>		<i>2,000</i>		
	<i>ACT Govt - E&P</i>		<i>1,000</i>	3,000	
Other		0	<u>695</u>	24,339	
Expenditure					
Catering			13,463		
Coach hire			2,605		
Production of proceedings	5,293				
Purchase of plant stock from Greening Australia	462				
Other	<u>330</u>	6,085	<u>1,275</u>	17,343	2
Surplus (Deficit)		(6,085)		6,996	
GENERAL ACCOUNT TOTALS					
Income					
Working Sub-account	5,609		6,175		
Grants Sub-account	16,746		22,000		
Investment Fund Sub-account	1,000		1,608		
Forum Sub-account	<u>0</u>	23,354	<u>24,339</u>	54,122	
Expenditure					
Working Sub-account	6,568		6,474		
Grants Sub-account	10,486		26,296		
Investment Fund Sub-account	1,010		1,000		
Forum Sub-account	<u>6,085</u>	24,150	<u>17,343</u>	51,113	
Surplus (Deficit)					
Working Sub-account	(960)		(299)		
Grants Sub-account	6,260		(4,296)		
Investment Fund Sub-account	(11)		608		
Forum Sub-account	<u>(6,085)</u>	(795)	<u>6,996</u>	3,008	

Notes:

- 1 Friends of Grasslands' Public Fund does not yet have Government approval but a bank account had to be opened and it required a deposit of at least \$10 to be operational.
- 2 This purchase is allocated to the Forum account because it was made using the profit generated from sales of Ngunnawal Plant Use provided to the Forum at a very low cost price.

FOG GENERAL ACCOUNT - BALANCE SHEET, 31 December 2015

		2015		2014		Note
ASSETS AND LIABILITIES						
Assets						
Bank deposits	<i>General account</i>	8,529		29,454		
	<i>Cash and cheques to be banked</i>	0		0		
	<i>Term deposits</i>	25,015	33,544	14,562	44,016	
Accounts receivable	<i>From Publication Acc</i>	70		599		
	<i>Other</i>	14,500	14,570	330	929	1
Merchandise stocks	<i>Beginning of year</i>	647		765		
	<i>Plus Purchases</i>	0		308		
	<i>Less Cost of goods sold</i>	(7)		(344)		
	<i>Less Cost of goods given away / written down</i>	0	640	(83)	647	
Depreciable equipment	<i>Beginning of year</i>	666		928		
	<i>Plus Purchases</i>	0		0		
	<i>Less depreciation</i>	262	404	262	666	2
			49,158		46,257	
Liabilities						
Payments pending			4,000		304	
Net assets			45,158		45,953	
ACCUMULATED FUNDS						
Funds at start of year						
Working Sub-account			13,973		14,273	
Grants Sub-account	<i>NCA grants</i>	12,484		4,693		
	<i>Environment and Planning, ACT Govt</i>	1,642		13,729		
	<i>ActewAGL</i>	250		250		
	<i>NSW Lands and Environment - for OCC</i>	0	14,376	0	18,673	
Investment Fund Sub-account			10,608		10,000	
Forum Sub-account			6,996	45,953	0	42,945
Current year surplus (deficit)						
Working Sub-account			(960)		(299)	
Grants Sub-account	<i>NCA grants</i>	(6,542)		7,791		
	<i>Environment and Planning, ACT Govt</i>	(1,698)		(12,087)		
	<i>ActewAGL</i>	0		0		
	<i>NSW Lands and Environment - for OCC</i>	14,500	6,260	0	(4,296)	3
Investment Fund Sub-account			(11)		608	
Forum Sub-account			(6,085)	(795)	6,996	3,008
Total accumulated funds						
Working Sub-account			13,014		13,973	
Grants Sub-account	<i>NCA grants</i>	5,942		12,484		
	<i>Environment and Planning, ACT Govt</i>	(56)		1,642		
	<i>ActewAGL</i>	250		250		
	<i>NSW Lands and Environment - for OCC</i>	14,500	20,636	0	14,376	
Investment Fund Sub-account			10,597		10,608	
Forum Sub-account			911	45,158	6,996	45,953

Notes:

- 1 Accounts receivable of \$14,500 at end 2015 is for NSW Government grant only invoiced at end December 2015
- 2 In the 2014 report, the 2014 end of year value for depreciable assets was incorrectly reported as \$404 instead of \$666. Therefore all relevant 2014 totals have been adjusted by \$262 in this report
- 3 There has been no activity on the ActewAGL grant for several years

FOG PUBLICATIONS ACCOUNT - INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2015

	2015		2014		Note
Income					
Book sale income			3,545		
<i>Grassland Flora sales</i>	1,728				
<i>Woodland Flora sales</i>	3,926				
<i>Other sales</i>	18		15		
<i>Less Cost of goods sold</i>	(4,003)		(1,537)		
	1,669		2,023		
Other income	110		1,303		
Postage and handling charges	583		135		3,460
	2,362				
Expenditure					
Woodland Flora Grant authoring and manuscript preparation	26,020		4,666		
Postage and handling costs	1,638		812		
Lock-up hire and other costs	301		617		
Complimentary copies of Woodland Flora provided to contributors etc	493				
Other books given away or written off	58		(92)		1
	28,509		6,003		
Surplus (Deficit)	(26,147)		(2,542)		

Notes:

- 1 Books given away or written off in 2014 is negative \$92 because extra stocks were located at stocktake and it has not been possible to reconcile recorded sales and previous stocktake figures

FOG PUBLICATIONS ACCOUNT - BALANCE SHEET, 31 December 2015

	2015		2014		Note
ASSETS AND LIABILITIES					
Assets					
Bank deposits			59,096		
<i>FOG Publications account</i>	20,600				
<i>Cash and cheques to be banked</i>	0		0		
	20,600		59,096		
Accounts receivable	2,170		240		
Book stocks					
<i>Beginning of year - Grassland Flora</i>	5,900		7,341		
<i>Beginning of year - Other</i>	104		108		
<i>Plus Purchases – Woodland Flora</i>	15,240		0		
<i>Less Cost of goods sold</i>	(4,003)		(1,537)		
<i>Less Cost of goods given away / written down</i>	(551)		92		
	16,691	39,461	6,004	65,341	1
Liabilities					
Payments pending			599		
<i>To General Account</i>	70				
<i>Other</i>	1,118		321		
	1,189	1,189	920	920	
Net assets	38,272		64,421		
ACCUMULATED FUNDS					
Funds at start of year					
Grassland Flora grant fund	10,439		10,439		
Woodland Flora grant fund	33,952		38,618		
Other	20,030		17,906		66,963
	64,421		66,963		
Current year surplus (deficit)					
Grassland Flora grant fund	0		0		
Woodland Flora grant fund	(26,020)		(4,666)		
Other	(127)		2,124		(2,542)
	(26,147)		(2,542)		
Total accumulated funds					
Grassland Flora grant fund	10,439		10,439		
Woodland Flora grant fund	7,932		33,952		
Other (including -\$2 rounding adjustment)	19,901		20,030		64,421
	38,272		64,421		

Notes:

- 1 Books given away or written off in 2014 is negative \$92 because extra stocks were located at stocktake and it has not been possible to reconcile recorded sales and previous stocktake figures

Sales (Sarah Sharp)

Woodlands Flora a field guide to the Southern Tablelands by Sarah Sharp, Rainer Rehwinkel, Dave Mallinson and David Eddy was published on 16 December 2015. By 31 December 270 copies had been distributed. The copies sold at the introductory price of \$20 until the end of January 2016. Prices are now set at \$20 for members, \$25 for non-members and \$15 each by the box or for trade orders.

Grassland Flora continues to sell with 138 copies distributed during the year (noting that it has been on sale now for 18 years, with more than 12,000 copies distributed in that time). The accounts for these sales are in Leon's Treasurer's report. *Grassland Flora* sells for \$20, with a price of \$12 each by the box or trade orders.

As previously, the books are sold for not much more than cost price, and profits gained are used to produce more educational resources. In the first instance profits will be used to pay for further print-runs of the *Woodland Flora*.

I thank all those who helped this year with facilitation of sales, and especially to those that so efficiently prepared 70 parcels of books ready for posting in one morning on 17 December.

MEMBERSHIP (Isobel Crawford)

Membership was up in 2015, from 200 members to 207 members. We welcomed 10 new members during the year, and one new life member, taking our total of life members to two, and honorary members remains at one. 123 of these members reside in ACT, 70 in NSW, nine in Victoria, two in Tasmania, two in Queensland and one in Germany. It is great that we have members out of our home region, the Southern Tablelands, and of course welcome your input into our newsletter or suggestions for activities in your parts of the country.

ADVOCACY

Advocacy Group (Naarilla Hirsch)

In 2015 we saw fewer development proposals and other public consultation opportunities relating to grassy ecosystems than in previous years – the Advocacy Group has just 16 submissions in this year. Again, these covered a range of conservation issues and proposals. Major concerns during the year included the NSW Draft State Planning Framework for Travelling Stock Reserves (TSRs), the development proposed at the Canberra brickworks, and various matters relating to the Commonwealth's EPBC Act and to the National Capital Plan.

A presentation titled *Urban planning issues for grasslands in the ACT region* was made to the Myer grassland symposium in Canberra in May. This was based on FOG's experiences in advocacy for our native grasslands.

A significant role of the Advocacy Group is networking with other environmental and community groups. Advocacy group members attend meetings of groups such as Bush on the Boundary and the Conservation Council's Biodiversity Working Group. We continue to attend a number of different presentations and community consultation meetings concerning conservation matters (including the Murrumbidgee to Googong (M2G) pipeline Environmental Reference Group), and to meet with Canberra Airport Group and the Riverview Group (about development of West Belconnen).

During this year we have been able to follow through with several issues of concern to the Advocacy Group, sometimes in conjunction with the Conservation Council. We met with ACT Government staff concerning possible advanced offset sites. We have written to the ACT Government with concerns about the ACT's weeds budget and the effect on our grassland reserves. We are also following through on the outcomes of various offsets for developments impacting on grasslands in the past.

Early in 2016 the Advocacy Group held its annual meeting to discuss priorities and other tasks for the year. New priorities include the upcoming revision of the ACT's grassland conservation strategy, lobbying for the upcoming ACT and federal elections, and the new listing for NTG in the southern tablelands. The Group will

continue to work on older issues including the state of NTG areas in the ACT, offsets, weeds, and several site-specific priorities such as West Belconnen, the eastern broadacre area, the NCA sites and Molonglo.

Advocacy Group membership is going through some changes – Kris Nash has left the group and Ross Dennis and Ann Milligan have joined. One area the current group lacks expertise is our knowledge of NSW environmental legislation and processes. Any member who could assist us in filling this gap should contact Naarilla Hirsch. What we have achieved this year would not have been possible without the contributions of all group members and, for the TSR submission, several other FOG members.

Conservation Council Biodiversity Working Group (Sarah Sharp and Tony Lawson)

Tony and Sarah have continued to represent FOG on the Conservation Council's Biodiversity Working Group. This meets once a month. Naarilla as the FOG Advocacy Group coordinator gets all notices and minutes and sometimes attends, as have other FOG committee members at times. The BWG is an extremely important network to be involved in, with the exchange of concerns, ideas and knowledge, as well as sharing the load of providing input to submissions or other matters. The main issues covered in 2015 were:

- Planning: West Belconnen (Riverview) development; Molonglo; North Gungahlin Strategic Environmental Assessment; Yarralumla Brickworks; Eastern Broadacre Plan, Williamsdale Solar Farm and the Ginninderra Field Station.
- Offsets: discussions with Government with representatives from the Cons Council and FOG
- Government biodiversity monitoring program development
- Weeds budgets

Bush on the Boundary

Bush on the Boundary was initially established in 2006 to provide a forum for exchange of information on biodiversity conservation with reference to nature reserves in Gungahlin and surrounding urban developments. Since then three other BOB groups were established. Molonglo BOB was established in 2010, North Watson BOB later (FOG is not involved in this one) and West Belconnen in 2015. They are an effective means to share information in an open forum, enabling an exchange of ideas and information and frankly discuss issues of common concern. No minutes are taken, and some matters discussed are in confidence.

Molonglo (Sarah Sharp)

While we remained all year anxiously waiting to see the Draft Plan of Management for Molonglo Reserve we had several very interesting trips out to parts of the corridor, to see the works being done to both protect the natural assets and provide opportunities for people to visit this area of the ACT. What became clear to me personally is how beautiful this part of the world is, and if there is one advantage to be gained from this complex and controversial development, is that of being able to access this area, hopefully with minimal impact on the ecology – a somewhat optimistic hope. There is a great deal of effort going in to make access appealing and encourage people to respect and care for the environment. There is also very impressive research going into enhancing and extending habitat for the Pink-tailed Worm-lizard and improvement of existing riparian and dryland habitat through weed control.

West Belconnen (Barbara Payne)

This reference group was established in 2015 to provide: a forum for information exchange, knowledge sharing and sharing of resources that assist biodiversity conservation at the urban bush interface, with a particular focus on urban development in close proximity to areas of high conservation value; and input into the development process with the aim of avoiding environmental impacts before they arise. It also aims to facilitate access to knowledge, expertise, and resources to add value to research, education and on-ground rehabilitation projects.

Membership of the Group includes representatives from the Land Development Agency, Conservation Council ACT Region, Strathnairn Arts Centre, Ginninderra Falls Association, Belconnen Community Association, Aboriginal interests, rural interests, Friends of Grasslands, Canberra Ornithologists, Ginninderra

Catchment Group and the Riverview Group. The current FOG representative is Barbara Payne. John Fitz Gerald is the reserve representative.

The Group has met each month since August 2015. Naarilla Hirsch attended the first meeting and Barbara Payne has attended all subsequent meetings except February 2016. It was agreed early on that meetings would be conducted under 'Chatham House Rules'. This report will therefore be brief. The Group has had very open discussions about the strategic directions for the development and the establishment of the Trust for the Development. Other matters discussed include the Reserve Management Plan, community engagement and community education, the Recreational Trails Master Plan, the Multipurpose Centre and the Landscape and Open Space Strategy. The Group has also received a report from the Ginninderra Falls Biodiversity Working Group.

Kosciusko to Coast (John Fitz Gerald)

K2C in 2015 restructured its activities in view of major change where long-term funding for K2C's Facilitator position via the Greater Eastern Ranges Initiative came to an end. The future for K2C will depend heavily on successes with grant application, and fortunately there was some in the second half of 2015. Also Facilitator Lesley Peden performs many assessments of Land for Wildlife for individual property owners and this has helped to keep K2C as a visible partnership. The major K2C Grassland project with the Myer Foundation was completed and acquitted in 2015. FOG had been an active partner throughout this 3-year exercise. One of the final events in the project was the Native Grasslands Sustainability Symposium held in Canberra - its success was a great tribute to the skills and energies of Kathryn Wells, the project's Facilitator. Many FOG members enjoyed taking part in this Symposium and interacting with Grasslands experts from across South-Eastern Australia. A second area of close interaction between FOG and K2C was the inception of a local Friends group and of managed conservation activity at Yass Gorge. Significant on-ground work will start in these grasslands in 2016.

ACTIVITIES

Activities Program (David Crawford, Margaret Ning, Paul Archer, Ann Milligan)

After the 2015 AGM, four committee members volunteered to form a FOG Activities team (A-team). We enthusiastically set out to plan a year-full of visits and meetings that might explore a range of aspects of grasslands.

First, thanks to John Fitz Gerald's prior arrangement, an early May morning was spent clearing invasive shrubs beside the lovely Poplars Grassland in the NSW part of Jerrabomberra. Several members of FOG tucked into the thickets of woody weeds adjacent to the 'good' grassland, and helped make quite a difference, in a very satisfying few hours.

As well, 13 other FOG activities have been run between May 2015 and March 2016, and all have been well attended. During 11 of these, FOG members and guests have walked/listened at, and/or surveyed, grassy sites in the region. The other two activities have been the annual mid-winter talks and tea in mid-July, and an end-of-year picnic in mid-December.

We made three walk/survey visits to Umbagog Blue Devil Grassland in Latham ACT – in late May, early September and late November – with the aim of observing how the forbs and grasses change in response to season and conditions. In October, FOG members also enjoyed three visits to sites in NSW: first, Lake Bathurst near Tarago (also visited in 2014), with its unusual lakebed species; next, several roadsides and cemeteries north and west of Taralga, partly in search of Buttercup Doubletail Orchids; and third, FOG member David Johnson's property between Bywong and Bungendore. A rather different walk was the members-only 'Bettongs walk' where we joined Kate Garrock of the Woodlands & Wetlands Trust at Mulligans Flat one evening in August. The two most recent activities have been a visit in February to Dr Ken Hodgkinson's experimental plots in Evatt ACT where burning and mowing are restoring native grassland, and an early March exploration of invertebrates living in the grassland and eucalypts at Yarramundi Reach.

FOG arranged a public walk in Stirling Park, in support of ACT Tree Week in late July, with Sarah Sharp speaking about FOG's work there, and Steve Thomas (of Friends of ACT Trees) and Wally Bell, respectively, speaking about the area's trees and its Aboriginal heritage. The FOG annual public 'wildflower walk' took place as usual in mid-November.

At the mid-July talks at Mugga Mugga Education Centre we welcomed Dr Annie Lane (ACT Conservator of Flora and Fauna) and FOG member Andrew Zelnik as speakers. Finally, we celebrated the end of the year with an indoor BYO 'picnic' on a wet night in mid-December at Jerrabomberra Wetlands – which also served as a quiet and informal but well-attended launch of *Woodland Flora*.

Sincere thanks to all our speakers, leaders and hosts at these activities, and to all the members and guests who have come along to enjoy them and show they were worth running.

National Capital Authority projects (Jamie Pittock)

FOG continued its efforts during the year to improve the conservation status of grassy ecosystems on national lands managed by the National Capital Authority (NCA) in central Canberra, namely Stirling Park (52 ha; Yarralumla), including subsidiary sites at Scrivener's Hut and Attunga Point, as well as at Yarramundi Reach (23 ha; Acton). The NCA has supported FOG with a grant \$6,000 in 2015 to support work parties with training, plants, herbicides and equipment.

Our work also benefitted from a \$6,000 grant for 2014-15 from the ACT Regional Delivery of the National Landcare Program administered by the ACT Environment and Planning Directorate, titled "Restoration of Grassy Ecosystems and Endangered Species Habitat in Central Canberra." FOG contributed nearly \$21,000 in volunteer labor to the project, along with nearly \$50,000 in management activities by the NCA and Rural Fire Service.

These funds enabled FOG to significantly enhance weed control and revegetate strategic areas at Yarramundi Reach and Stirling Park. FOG volunteers contributed 676 hours work in 2015, for a total of nearly 5,200 since 2009. An estimated 1053 m³ of woody weeds were felled in 2015 (aided by the expanded FOG fleet of two chainsaws), for a total of 4393 m³ since 2009. FOG also supported work by the Molonglo Catchment Coordinating Committee and Ngunawal traditional owners to restore a small, contiguous area of ACT government held woodland at the eastern end of Stirling Park, crudely known as 'section 128'. FOG thanks the NCA and the ACT Environment and Planning Directorate for their strategic support.

Work on the sites has focused on weed control, maintaining and enhancing plantings, and monitoring the effectiveness of these interventions. We are making great progress in removing woody weeds at Stirling Park and completed the first cut over of Stirling Ridge at the work party in February 2016. Monitoring at Yarramundi Reach and Stirling Park shows an ongoing reduction in woody weed cover but mixed results for herbaceous weeds. Sadly the spring and summer of 2015-16 been bountiful growing season for African Lovegrass, Blackberry and St John's Wort.

FOG welcomes the NCA's ongoing management activities, including a timely revision of the 2009 ecological management plan (to be finalized in 2016) for these lands and consultation over future environmental works. FOG was concerned, however, that the 2015 revision of the National Capital Plan failed to improve the protection afforded the natural heritage values of these lands despite FOG's entreaties.

Priorities for 2016 include completing the first pass at woody weed removal at Stirling Park, a new approach to weed management at Yarramundi Reach and supporting implementation of the NCA's new ecological management plan. Further efforts are also needed to legally protect the sites.

Hall Cemetery (John Fitz Gerald)

Four work mornings were once again held throughout the year in the grassy woodland block surrounding Hall Cemetery, involving a total of around 70 volunteer-hours. Continuing the trend of recent years, little effort was needed for large woody weeds - a few tenacious Briar Roses and Hawthorns were the exceptions. Instead, control focused on fleshy weeds including various Thistles, Plantain, Cleavers and Capeweed via both physical removal and herbiciding. The persistence of the Cleavers is particularly annoying. In addition areas of exotic grasses are further pushed back by attacks on Phalaris, Perennial Rye and Tall Fescue, but this is a big job. The exotic grass flowering was huge this year including the species above together with Yorkshire Fog, Giant Brome and Sweet Vernal, so a lot of new germination is likely in future years. Finally, areas under our steadily growing Bursarias are regularly maintained to keep cover low.

Hall Cemetery has become one of the sites specified in the fantastic Canberra Nature Map website and mobile phone app. By mid-Feb 2016, 90 sightings had been logged of 55 species:- 29 plants, 24 birds and 2 fungi with a total of 9 non-native exotics included. Spiders, insects, moths, mammals, are yet to be added!

Cooma Grassland project (Margaret Ning)

All had been quiet on the OCCGR front until the middle of 2016 when FOG began the process of applying for a \$32,000 Local Land Services (LLS) grant to pay contractors to target the ever-encroaching St John's Wort (SJW) (*Hypericum perforatum*) and African Lovegrass (ALG) (*Eragrostis curvula*) on OCCGR. Hopefully, by continuing our earlier fight against those weeds the populations of the Monaro Golden Daisy (MGD) (*Rutidosia leiolepis*) that occur on OCCGR and two nearby sites would be protected for longer.

LLS funding for the three year project also provides for monitoring the weed populations and MGD annually, and conducting three field days. Like all grant applications, the process of securing the grant took some time, with several levels of applications involving liaison with a number of people. The satisfying news that we had been successful with our application came in September 2015, although there were still some documents to prepare after that, and the money has not yet arrived.

The idea is to undertake best practice weed management for the Wort and Lovegrass, and to document and communicate the results. The monitoring methods were developed with Rainer Rehwinkel to be consistent with what has been used by Office of Environment and Heritage for monitoring weeds and threatened species, and will be repeated every year at the same time. The initial monitoring was undertaken in early January.

As of the second week of February, this year's spraying commenced for a couple days but was suspended when the contractor told our contact in Council that the Wort still needed to grow a bit more to become more evident. The main issue that we wish to see, as best practice, is that care is taken to prevent overspraying but to also ensure all the weeds are treated. I have discussed our strategy with the contractors, and explained that we would like them to pursue the SJW and ALG from a closer range than they may normally do things. They know that we realise the job will take longer if this care is taken, thus costing more, but we wish to demonstrate that better outcomes will be achieved as a result. We shall spend nearly half of the total spraying budget in this first year in an attempt to hit the SJW and ALG hard, prioritising the areas where the MGD is present. The amounts spent on contractors will be reduced in each of the following years, as fewer weeds recover.

Once we have something to communicate to the world, we shall conduct our first field day.

Scottsdale Monitoring (Linda Spinaze)

Wednesday 11th November was the date decided upon for the annual Scottsdale Monitoring event for 2015. The forecast was for rainy periods, so we were prepared!

We have monitored these particular sites since 2009, to assess whether African Lovegrass is decreasing or increasing relative to the native population, to identify patterns of dominance across the transect over time, and to assess whether ALG is regenerating or senescing over time.

We have 9 sites to monitor, and we need high vehicles to be able to access some of them. Fortunately for us, this year Matt Appleby was not only available to assist us on the day, but he had monitored 2 of the sites the day before, thus lessening our load on the Wednesday.

Thanks to John Fitzgerald for assisting on the day, and taking home and transferring all the data and photographs. And also thanks to Margaret Ning, Geoff Robertson, Nola McKeon, Jo Walker, Julie Lindner and Ros Wallace for doing the monitoring on the day.

Fortunately those umbrellas didn't need to be used too often during the day!

COMMUNICATION

Website (Richard Bomford)

The FoG website operated smoothly over the past year, with no major changes. The principal new pages were the proceedings of the 2014 FoG Forum, *Grass half full or grass half empty?* which were added late in the year and into 2016. Other additions were FoG newsletters and advocacy submissions, which are added as they become available.

In 2015 there were around 27,000 visitors, who downloaded 31 GB of data from the website; over 90% of visits were for less than 30 seconds. The most popular web pages were 'grasslands' (7,900 views), the home page (7,700) and 'Grasses of NSW' (3,300), followed by the March 2011 newsletter (2,900). The most popular document downloads were the 2014 Forum final notice (1,900 downloads), Plant communities classification version 1.1 (1,300), and a DPI pasture management brochure (900). The Golden Sun Moth report remains popular (700 downloads).

The website continued to be hosted by HostBig and the domain was registered through OnlyDomains, with email provided by Google.

Newsletter (Ann Milligan, editor)

Six issues of the bi-monthly newsletter were produced during 2015–16, each one comprising 14 pages of news, reports and contributed articles.

The newsletters advertised upcoming activities (such as visits to sites, or the mid-winter talks) and workparties at particular grassland sites; and later reported what had been done. Advocacy is an important part of FOG's existence, and each newsletter issue included a summary of submissions made (which are in full on the website). A new feature this year was a regular report on what FOG Committee members do.

We benefited from a steady supply of interesting stories (and a poem) from members, and your wonderful photos, including the ultra-close-ups John Fitz Gerald has been taking this year at the ANBG. Among the range of contributions were Michael Bedingfield's regular articles, which introduced us to three grassland birds and four insects. Five articles from Janet Russell gave insights to grassland species' behaviour in her garden, and Jenny Liney, Curator of the Wallace Herbarium at the Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Garden, sent in articles and photos on Wild Sorghum and Barbed Wire Grass.

It is pleasing (to this editor) that more members are taking up the offer of receiving emailed newsletters (with or without printed copies as well), thereby seeing the beautiful photos in colour. Of course, we all can

see the coloured images when we check out back-copies of the newsletter on the FOG website. We are only able to do that thanks to Webmaster Richard Bomford, who reliably and patiently uploads each newsletter in pdf and html, two months after it has first been sent to members.

Warm thanks to all who contribute to the newsletter – whether writing, taking photos, advising and proofreading, or joining in the joyful packing, distribution and upload of each issue.

e-Bulletin (Ann Milligan, editor)

FOG e-Bulletins are emailed to all FOG members and also to non-FOG groups. They are intended to be an alert and reminder about relevant activities, both FOG and non-FOG, in the near future. Occasionally extra reminders are also emailed to members.

e-Bulletins were sent out in March, May, July, September, November in 2015 and in January 2016, prepared (with helpful comments from others) and despatched by Ann Milligan or Sarah Sharp.

Other publications

Proceedings of the 2014 Forum (Ann Milligan)

FOG's forum titled '*Grass half full or grass half empty: Valuing native grassy landscapes*', during 30 October–1 November 2014, celebrated FOG's 20 years of activity. A range of valuable information was presented, ideal for management and understanding of grassland environments.

Much of that information is now available as the forum 'Proceedings', online and downloadable at no cost, from <http://www.fog.org.au/forum2014.htm/>.

The 'Proceedings' consists of individual items, and compilations. There are compilations of the whole forum (in hi res or low res; 194 pages all up, no blanks), and of each of the four sections:

- spoken presentations (as edited transcripts with images from the slides);
- posters (as displayed at the forum);
- workshop sessions (some full accounts, some powerpoint slides, some abstracts only);
- field talks (abstracts; plus the Rehwinkel Floristic Value Scoring method, described at the Jerrabomberra grassland site and published here in full).

Huge thanks to Ms Helen Horton, an editor of great experience, who helped edit the transcripts, and to Webmaster Richard Bomford for his helpful advice and for uploading the files promptly onto the FOG website. Transcription (clean and rapid) was by staff of TranscriberOnline, <http://www.transcriberonline.com/>.

Thanks also to the 2014 Forum presenters, both for checking their papers after we had prepared them for publication, and for giving permission to include them in the Proceedings.

Woodland Flora (Sarah Sharp)

We just managed to complete *Woodlands Flora a field guide to the Southern Tablelands* by Sarah Sharp, Rainer Rehwinkel, Dave Mallinson and David Eddy before the end of 2015, enabling us to launch it at our December 16 party and distribute copies prior to Christmas. By 31 December we had already distributed 270 copies. We are very grateful for the funding provided by ACT Government that made this publication possible. Rosemary Purdie did a fabulous job editing the text and checking it against herbarium specimens. The result, which, biased as I most certainly am, I think is excellent, is greatly enhanced by the amazing quality of photographs provided so generously by the 35 photographers. My personal, and on behalf of all the authors, thanks to you all, and to those that supported us through the last final steep grade till its completion. I am currently distributing the books on behalf of FOG, and sales continue well, both as individual orders and orders to bookshops and other retail outlets, including CSIRO Publishing.