



Friends of  
Grasslands



# ANNUAL REPORT 2022



Prepared for the FOG Annual General Meeting, Wednesday, 8 March, 2023  
Conservation Council Offices, Lena Karmel Lodge, Barry Drive, Acton, ACT



*supporting native grassy ecosystems*





Relevant extract from the ACT *Associations Incorporation Act 1991*

73 Presentation of statement to members

- (1) At each annual general meeting of an incorporated association the following documents must be presented by the committee for the consideration of the meeting:
- (a) the required statement of the association's accounts for the most recently ended financial year of the association;
  - (b) a copy of the reviewer's or auditor's report to the association in relation to the association's accounts for that financial year;
  - (c) a report signed by 2 members of the committee stating—
    - (i) the name of each member of the committee of the association during the most recently ended financial year of the association and, if different, at the date of the report; and
    - (ii) the principal activities of the association during the most recently ended financial year and any significant change in the nature of those activities that occurred during that financial year; and
    - (iii) the net profit or loss of the association for the most recently ended financial year.

*In relation to paragraph (a) above, this report contains the relevant financial statements as provided by the 2022 Treasurer of FOG, Janet Russell.*

*In relation to paragraph (b) above, the Treasurer will table at the AGM, a report from Auditor, Pauline Hore JP (ACT); Bec; CPA for FOG's financial year ended 31 December 2022.*

*Signatures of two FOG committee members, as per paragraph (c) above,*



*Jamie Pittock, President 2022*



*Helen Sims, Secretary 2022*

*In relation to (c)(i) above see the table FOG Committee and FOG Roles in 2022*

*In relation to paragraph (c) (ii) above see contributions by FOG members as acknowledged. Activities throughout the year remained consistent with FOG's Vision and Rationale.*

*In relation to paragraph (c) (iii) financial statements including net profit/loss are shown under the heading Financial Reports as prepared by Treasurer Janet Russell.*

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*This report was compiled by Helen Sims, Secretary of FOG 2022 from contributions provided by active members of FOG. Photos were kindly provided and inserted by Andrew Zelnik with much gratitude from Helen. Thanks also to Richard Bomford for his website assistance. The report goes only a short way towards informing just how much commitment of time and energy is freely given in any year to the support of native grassy ecosystems. **To all volunteers, THANK YOU!!***

*FOG acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we live and work, and their deep and continuing connection to Country. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.*

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**Front Cover Images:** Background - post ecological burn native wildflowers in November (top) and December (bottom) at Top Hut Travelling Stock Reserve (TSR), Dry Plain, NSW. Foreground – a small sample of the very high diversity of native flora and fauna that occur at this iconic Natural Temperate Grassland site.

**Back Cover Images:** Background - (top) Chamomile Burr-daisy *Calotis anthemoides* at Sweeneys TSR at Lake George (NSW) and (bottom) carpet of Weeping Grass *Microlaena stipoides* in Hall Cemetery woodland (ACT). Foreground - a very small sample of the large diversity of native wildflowers and fauna at these and other sites visited in 2022 which also included Flea Bog Flat (ACT), Budjan Galindji Grassland Nature Reserve (ACT), Jaramlee-West Macgregor Nature Reserve (ACT), a private property in the Sutton area (NSW), Tarengo TSR near Boorowa (NSW), a rural roadside in the Bowning area (NSW), and a rail cutting in the Bredbo area (NSW).

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# Friends of Grasslands Vision and Rationale

In January 2022, Friends of Grasslands agreed to adopt a new vision, together with clarified goals and the rationale behind the vision. This was also reported in the 2021 Annual Report.

*Healthy, biodiverse and connected remnant native grassy ecosystems  
continue to support life on Earth*

FOG will achieve this vision by:

- Acting to halt the decline of native grassy ecosystems and their biodiversity and achieve the maximum level of recovery possible
- Promoting and facilitating protection of the biodiversity of grassy ecosystems within and across the landscape
- Recognising the need for community stewardship of these ecosystems, thereby continuing the cultural care provided by the Aboriginal peoples for millennia
- Respecting the views and knowledge of all stakeholders and working with them to achieve our vision
- Facilitating implementation of best practice management and encouraging development of methods to improve conservation through hands-on application, research, education, strategic planning and monitoring
- Advocating for effective environmental laws, enforcement mechanisms, planning and management to underpin protection and conservation of native grassy ecosystems.

Rationale:

Native ecosystems and their biodiversity have intrinsic value.

Resilient native ecosystems are vital to our physical well-being through the provision of ecosystem services.

Human connections and interaction with nature and biodiversity are vital to our mental well-being.

The cultural traditions of Aboriginal peoples underpin our unique native habitats and guide the principles and implementation of sustainable and conservative use of our grassy ecosystems within the broader landscape.

Biodiversity cannot be sustained in isolated remnants.

## FOG Committee and FOG Roles in 2022

President	Jamie Pittock
Vice Presidents	Sarah Sharp, Andrew Zelnik
Secretary	Helen Sims
Treasurer	Janet Russell
Committee members	Margaret Ning, Rainer Rehwinkel, Heather Sweet, Hugh Coppel (from September), Trevor Preston (from September), Julia Raine (from September)
Public Fund Management Committee	Kim Pullen*, Janet Russell (coordinator), Andrew Zelnik (co-coordinator)
Advocacy team	Hugh Coppel, John Fitz Gerald*, Alice Hathorn*, Aaron Midson*, Michael Mulvaney*, Jamie Pittock, Trevor Preston, Julia Raine, Rainer Rehwinkel, Geoff Robertson, Sarah Sharp (coordinator), Matt Whitting*(part of 2022), Andrew Zelnik (ad hoc)
Supported Projects team	Alice Hathorn*, Ken Hodgkinson*, David Johnson*, Andrew Zelnik (coordinator)
Events & activities coordinators	Eleanor Galvin*, Kath McGuirk* (NSW publicity) Margaret Ning
On-ground project coordinators	John Fitz Gerald*, Margaret Ning, Jamie Pittock, Linda Spinaze*
Communication team	Newsletter – Paul Archer* (coordinator since July), Libby Keen*, Margaret Ning, Geoff Robertson (coordinator to July), Sue Ross*, Sarah Sharp (distribution)  e-Bulletins and Special Bulletins – Margaret Ning (coordinator) and Eleanor Galvin* (editing, publishing)  Facebook – Sarah Hnatiuk*, Libby Keen*, Rainer Rehwinkel (administrator), Julia Raine, Geoff Robertson*  <a href="mailto:info@fog.org.au">info@fog.org.au</a> – Janet Russell  Presentations and displays – Geoff Robertson
Website manager	Richard Bomford*
Dropbox	John Fitz Gerald*
Governance sub-committee; ACNC contact	Janet Russell, Helen Sims
Membership	Margaret Ning, Heather Sweet (coordinator)
Book sales	Sarah Sharp
Representing FOG in other organisations	Hugh Coppel, John Fitz Gerald*, Alice Hathorn*, Margaret Ning, Jamie Pittock, Rainer Rehwinkel, Sarah Sharp, Helen Sims, Andrew Zelnik
Public Officer	Andy Russell*

## President's report - *Jamie Pittock*

Seldom has FOG's mission for the conservation of grassy ecosystems, the most endangered ecological communities in Australia, been more tested than in 2022.

A third year of La Niña weather conditions saw grasslands flourish but at significant costs. Rampant weed infestations overwhelmed control efforts and exposed the limited resources available in both the ACT and NSW government programs. Control of some key weeds like St John's Wort essentially ceased over most of the conservation estate. Further, the growth of grass biomass threatens to smother other grassland flora and fauna. Efforts to reduce grass through burning or slashing or grazing have been limited by wet conditions and cross-agency coordination challenges and lack of resources.

Sadly, the governments have not acted with requisite urgency to protect key grassy ecosystem remnants. While the new Federal Government has announced its intention to prevent extinctions and conserve threatened biota with new laws, it is yet to match fine rhetoric with action. Three examples from 2022 demonstrate the need for rapid improvement in practice by the Federal department for the environment and other Commonwealth agencies:

Instead of being rejected outright, Defence Housing Australia's dreadful proposed residential development at North Lawson has been accepted by the Federal Minister for further assessment under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act;

Canberra Airport Group gained permission in questionable circumstances to build a road around the north end of the airport that will bisect and kill off a key population of the critically endangered Canberra Grassland Earless Dragon (recently identified as one of four separate Grassland Earless Dragon species within the region). FOG is seeking a last-minute revocation of this approval.

And bizarrely, the Department of Defence has sought approval to damage grassy woodland habitat for a totally unnecessary car park at Campbell Park.

As indicated in the advocacy section of this report, defending these and other grassy ecosystems occupied much of FOG's time and energy during 2022 and will continue to occupy FOG into 2023.

There are some reasons to be optimistic. In December the world's governments agreed to targets to protect 30% of the Earth's surface in reserves for a representative array of ecosystems by 2030, and to restore 30% of each ecosystem. As these targets were endorsed by the Australian Government, implementation should mean protection for remaining temperate grassy ecosystems. The Federal Government's new environment laws are proposed to include regional plans marking 'no development' zones to protect matters of national environmental significance. FOG has an opportunity to apply our expertise to ensure that grassy ecosystem remnants will be designated for protection.

Following FOG's work with ANU students in 2021 to review management of grassy habitats outside reserves in the ACT, we met with ACT Government agencies. This has resulted in some extra weed control at four sites, and more conservation work is planned for the Black Street grassland in Yarralumla. FOG's on-ground work has seen great progress in better management of grasslands at Top Hut travelling stock reserve near Adaminaby, Hall Cemetery, Budjan Galindji Reserve in Franklin, Blue Gum Point and Gurubung Dhaura (Stirling Park) in Yarralumla, and Yarramundi Reach Grasslands.

FOG's work to conserve grassland sites either side of Lake Burley Griffin was recognised with a 2022 ACT Heritage Award. We thank the ACT Government for financial support for some on-ground conservation activities, including through the ACT Environment Grants. In 2022, FOG continued our diverse and vital range of activities to promote the conservation of grassy ecosystems, including our work on education, field trips, on-ground projects, grants, and advocacy, as well as the excellent newsletter. I again thank the members of the Committee and other volunteers leading these activities for their critical work. On behalf of FOG, I wish to pay tribute to three special FOG members:

Marg Ning celebrated 26 years' service on the FOG committee in 2022. Marg has been leader for our conservation efforts in so many areas, including instigating key on-ground conservation work, organising field trips, as well as helping to produce the newsletter;

Janet Russell is stepping down as Treasurer and leaving the committee at the 2023 AGM. Janet has made a great many contributions to FOG – she joined the committee in 2004, has done a stint as secretary, and most recently, since 2017 it has been her stewardship of our finances that means that FOG has rigorous systems in place and is in great financial health; and

Andrew Zelnik is also stepping down from the FOG committee at the 2023 AGM. Andrew has been a committee member since 2012 and one of our Vice-Presidents since 2021, as well as a member of the Public Fund Management Committee, co-ordinator and instigator of the FOG Supported Projects Sub-committee (Grassy Ecosystem Grants) and also contributor to many of FOG's other activities such as the 2014 forum; advocacy submissions; Facebook page, mid-winter talks and the newsletter; plus the 2018 Monaro Golden Daisy mapping project and on-ground endeavours like monitoring surveys of Ginninderry and Scottsdale, and assisting Margaret with field trip reccies and logistics. I am grateful that he will continue to coordinate our hugely successful grassy ecosystems conservation grants program.

I encourage any FOG member interested in doing a little more to volunteer to join the committee or to take on one of the other modest but enjoyable activities that make FOG so vibrant and effective. Please call me if you would like to discuss options to help more (m. 0407 265 131).

Thanks to donations from FOG members, we were able to employ a part-time project officer in 2022 who ramped up FOG's efforts to advocate for conservation. While Aaron Midson has left to undertake PhD studies, in 2023 FOG will focus on strategic advocacy to try and pro-actively conserve grassy ecosystems rather than fighting rear-guard efforts against those seeking to destroy significant habitat, such as the Canberra Airport Group.

We begin 2023 with three key initiatives for systematic conservation of our threatened grassy ecosystems. In the ACT, we are engaging in the reform of the planning system in order to protect off-reserve habitats. We have partnered with the Conservation Council to advocate for a biodiversity network to conserve and link grassy ecosystem remnants across land tenures in the ACT. We expect to support the ACT Government's proposed biodiversity corridor pilot projects as a welcome and tangible expression of how this could work. In NSW, we will join with partners in the Monaro region to improve protections for grassy ecosystem remnants.

Please redouble your support for FOG in 2023 with membership, participation in events, labour, and donations for the conservation of grassy ecosystems.

February 2023



## Financial reports – Janet Russell

Consistent with the requirements of the *Associations Incorporation Act 1991* as Treasurer, Janet Russell, will present the following reports for 2022 at the 2023 AGM on 8 March 2023 –

### Treasurer's Report to Committee on Annual Accounts 31 December 2022 - General Account

There has been a considerable reduction in unspent grant money over the past year. At 31 December 21 the unspent grants were \$29,570, and at 31 December 2022 this figure was reduced to \$8,934. This illustrates the amount of money that has been spent on weed spraying and other weed removal this year.

This is also reflected in the reduction of the balance of the General Account from \$80,469 to \$67,577, as the funds allocated to us by the various government bodies for work on their lands is spent. Since the end of 2022 we have received another \$6,000 from the National Capital Authority.

We have been unable to account for some Woodland Flora (\$387) and Grassland Flora books (\$50). This may be able to be resolved in the future.

### Public fund

The Public Fund received \$18,210 in donations this year and \$9,837 was spent on FOG projects. The balance of funds carried forward for 2023 projects is \$8,637.

Janet Russell, Treasurer  
Friends of Grasslands Inc  
10 February 2023



Geoff Robertson talking to ANU students about biodiversity conservation and land management work, by FOG and Yarralumla Residents' Association, at Gurubang Dhaura (Stirling Park), Yarralumla, ACT. April 2022

## Friends of Grasslands Inc Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2022 - General Account

	2022		2021	
ASSETS				
Current Account		67,577		80,469
Investments				
Term Deposit 2502	9,688		9,663	
Term Deposit 2504	7,087		7,063	
Term Deposit 2505	11,389		11,355	
Consolidated Term Deposits		28,164		28,081
Value of stock b.f. 1 Jan 22				
Publications				
Stock Woodland Flora	860		3,432	
Stock Grassland Flora	1,287		1,586	
Stock bought	6,271		2,060	
Sub-total	8,419		7,078	
Less cost of books sold/unaccounted etc	5,804		4,930	
Value of stock c.f. 31 Dec 22	2,615		2,148	
TOTAL ASSETS	98,356		110,698	
LIABILITIES				
Grants				
NCA	563		2,684	
ACT Gov Hall Cemetery	276		476	
ACT Gov Blue Gum Point	8,095		26,410	
Total Grants	8,934		29,570	
FOG Equity 31 Dec 2022	89,422		81,128	
TOTAL LIABILITIES		98,356		110,698

Friends of Grasslands Inc Public Fund Accounts y.e. 31 December 2022  
Income and Expenditure

	2022		2021	
Income				
Donations				
FSP	-		5,775	
TSR Top Hut	2,224		1,003	
Hall Cemetery	-		1,500	
Suspense A/c TSR Rates	-		152	
Other	15,986			
Total Income		18,210		8,430
Less Expenses				
Supported Projects	1,500		6,492	
TSR – To Hut rates	304		152	
Hall Cemetery	-		-	
Advocacy contractor	7,425		-	
Other grants	608		-	
Total Expenses		9,837		6,644
Net Income/(Expenses)		8,373		1,786

Friends of Grasslands Inc Public Fund Accounts y.e. 31 December 2022  
Balance Sheet

Balance Sheet

	2022		2021	
Assets				
Public Fund Bank Account	12,361		3,988	
Total Assets		12,361		3,988
Liabilities				
Top Hut TSR	2,224		902	
Hall Cemetery	1,500		1,500	
TSR Rates paid by GA	-		152	
Balance funds carried forward	8,637		1,434	
Total Liabilities		12,361		3,988



## Advocacy - *Sarah Sharp*

It has been an eventful and extremely busy year for FOG's advocacy arm, with many issues requiring significant work. I have outlined some of the major matters below. The advocacy group was considerably strengthened later in 2022 this year by four additional members, who have been involved in a number of issues already. In addition, other members of FOG have contributed their expertise and time to assist with particular matters. We will always welcome input from members of FOG on issues that you may have particular expertise or interest in.

### Reactive advocacy: response to calls for community input

In 2022 the Advocacy Group made 24 submissions. By jurisdiction, 18 were related to ACT lands and governance, five to Commonwealth lands or governance and one on NSW governance. By subject matter, 13 were responding to development applications, three on other site matters, five on legislation and three on governance. Major issues that we provided significant input into were as follows:

#### ACT Planning Bill review

After an initial extremely disappointing response to our submission to review the bill in relation to consideration of ecological matters, we had two other opportunities to present our concerns, in writing and later in person to the Assembly's Planning Committee. We were heartened by their report, which included many of our concerns in their recommendations. We await with interest the outcomes of these recommendations. In late 2022 submissions were called for to comment on the draft District Strategies and Territory Plan (due 3 March 2023); these will be key documents to determine how the Planning Bill is implemented.

#### Draft Urban Forest Bill and Draft Action Plan to prevent the loss of mature native trees

The Urban Forest Bill guides legislation and programs for conservation of biodiversity within the urban area. However, the major focus was related to planting trees; our concerns of whether grassland areas would become a target proved correct, as several plantings were undertaken in and adjacent to grasslands and/or deciduous trees planted close to mature native trees. The Draft Action Plan to prevent the loss of mature native trees included protection of dead standing trees and mature native trees (often not in good health, and horticulturally, of no value), neither of which were previously protected under legislation. We hope the final Bill will better meld requirements under the Mature Trees Action Plan.

#### Commonwealth matters

Of particular concern were three development issues on Commonwealth land - at North Lawson, the proposed Airport Northern Road and a proposal to considerably extend the car parks at Campbell Park offices into habitat for threatened species and communities. All three developments displayed blatant disregard for conservation of matters of national environmental significance. On all three matters the Advocacy Group members as well as other community groups and ecologists have undertaken considerable effort to turn around these decisions.

#### Proposed Lawson North development

Defence Housing Australia's Lawson North development application was lodged for referral in August 2022. The application was for a larger area than in the original application, that included more of the natural grassland within the enclosed area and provided no effective buffer to the remaining grassland. FOG submitted a detailed response and FOG, along with the Conservation

Council and Ginninderra Catchment Group, have participated in several actions, meetings and protest actions in a coordinated campaign. The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) published a decision in October 2022 that the proposal is a controlled action and requires assessment and approval under the EPBC Act before it can proceed. We wait with some trepidation for the results of that EIS, and are prepared for further lobbying, representation. and community action to prevent this development from going ahead.

### Airport Northern Road

This issue affects one of the nation's most important grassland areas. For some years now, FOG has lobbied against the proposal by Canberra Airport to build a sealed road at the northern end of the airport that would bisect Grassland Earless Dragon (GED) habitat. During 2022 members of FOG and others have engaged to attempt to turn around the decision to proceed with the road and likely impacts on the Canberra GED.

Original approval was given for the road on 11 November 2009, subject to strong conditions. In May 2020 these conditions were weakened and the approval went through the same day. All attempts at representations to the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (the environment department) were stymied and it is only since the change of government that the environment department has engaged with FOG.

In the meantime genetic research found that four separate GED species existed, with two of them – the Bathurst (*Tympanocryptis mcartneyi*) and Victorian (*T. pinguicollis*) species - likely extinct. The other two were the Canberra GED (*T. lineata*) and Monaro GED (*T. osbornei*) named after Will Osborne who rediscovered GED in the ACT in the 1990s and has done so much for their conservation and protection. The public land next to the airport currently containing a grassy verge and narrow dirt track is part of just one of two remaining habitats and the numbers of both populations are extremely low. The proposed road will fragment that population and is highly likely to result in the extinction of the north Canberra population. The Canberra GED has been declared one of 110 critically endangered species that must not be allowed to go extinct.

New information not available at the time of a decision is the main grounds on which an EPBC decision can be revisited. Information was provided to the new environment minister, Tanya Plibersek, who agreed to consider the request to review the original decision in light of the new information. The NCA is holding off approving road construction pending advice from the Minister. We are still waiting on a formal response to our submissions.

## Proactive Advocacy

### The Biodiversity Network

The advocacy group has been actively pursuing better protection and management for grassy ecosystem areas within the ACT. The paper, [\*A biodiversity network for the ACT: a tenure-blind framework for cohesive nature conservation across the ACT\*](#), was prepared as a Conservation Council Biodiversity Working Group proposal to government to outline how such a network could be used to protect all areas of conservation value regardless of tenure (leased and unleased land). This clearly overlaps considerably with legislation currently under review (the Planning Act together with the District Strategies and review of the Territory Plan, the Urban Forest Bill); with governance matters (including the NRM Plan, the draft Action Plan for protecting Mature Native Trees and various government programs, particularly the Connecting Nature Connecting People program), and with current administrative practices and the shift in emphasis required to consider human wellness in all government programs. Adoption of this proposal will be strongly pursued in 2023 through lobbying with government.

## On-ground management

Members of FOG have been actively pursuing the implementation of best practice ecological management across the urban landscape, through liaison with the team members of the Connecting Nature Connecting People program, lobbying land managers about specific sites, providing guidance to lessees and Landcare groups and through membership of the Biodiversity Conservation Forum.

## Other advocacy involvement

### Biodiversity Working Group

At the end of the year four representatives from FOG were involved in the working group. Membership of this group and attendance at meetings has assisted with FOG advocacy matters considerably, as well as ensuring that grassy ecosystem matters are appreciated and noted by other community groups.

### Biodiversity Conservation Forum

Biodiversity Conservation Forum meetings held four times a year are co-chaired by the Executive Group Manager, Environment, Heritage and Water Division of the ACT Government, ACT Landcare and the Executive Director, Conservation Council ACT Region. Participation in the Forum is by joint invitation from the Conservation Council ACT Region and the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate. Apart from FOG, members include representatives of local environment and Landcare organisations, and relevant government representatives. This Forum is proving to be an excellent means to establish collaboration between community and government representatives. Matters discussed have included the Mature Tree Action Plan, inappropriate planting of trees impacting natural grasslands and mature native trees, the Biodiversity Network proposal, biodiversity connectivity mapping, Australia's State of the Environment Report 2021.

All submissions are published on the [FOG website](#). Further information on many of these matters can be found in our newsletters. For other information, contact [advocacy@fog.org.au](mailto:advocacy@fog.org.au).

### Project Officer

Aaron Midson commenced working in July. Through generous donations from members of FOG he was employed for 6 months assisting with advocacy issues. FOG is extremely grateful to Sustineo Ltd who employed Aaron and undertook the administration of his contract to FOG for no cost. His help with providing background material was much appreciated, undertaking some of the record keeping for advocacy matters, website checks and filing, organising and attending meetings to do with the Airport Northern Road and helping with mapping for the paper on the Biodiversity Network. He provided a detailed report on the Greens and Labor parties' progress in achieving election commitments and policy positions. He also investigated available information on past environment budgets to assist with FOG's proposed 2023 submission on the ACT budget.

I am very grateful to Aaron for his assistance over that time, to help ease some of the load of what was an extremely challenging year in terms of advocacy.

## Communication - *Geoff Robertson*

### News of Friends of Grasslands – *Paul Archer*

The bi-monthly News of Friends of Grasslands is FOG's principal communication medium. Since 1994 its articles have related how FOG and other agencies, groups and individuals support grassy ecosystems through on-ground work, research and advocacy. The November–December 2022 edition was the 159th in the series. All issues are freely available and searchable on the [FOG website](#).



As in previous years, articles, drawings, and photographs imparted well-researched information relevant to grassy ecosystems and respectful of First Nations' traditional land management practices. FOG's continuing advocacy was outlined, and submissions summarised. Regular articles covering the plants, insects and animals of grasslands and grassy woodlands added interest and variety while the 'News Update' and reports of FOG's on-ground work and field visits kept members up to date and informed.

Around 80% of newsletters are distributed by email on or around the first day of every second month with the remainder being printed and sent via Australia Post. The email route has advantages – it can be sent without delay and at no cost to FOG, photos are in colour and there is virtually no environmental impact. A trial run of packing the newsletter into envelopes had mixed results. It enabled more pages to be included for a single postage stamp within Australia Post rules but was cumbersome to pack so the decision was made to revert to the long-standing method of folding and sticky tape. Distribution is traditionally handled by an informal group who fold, label, stamp and post the hard copy six times a year.

There are many steps involved in writing and producing a quality newsletter. FOG thanks all newsletter contributors and everyone involved in writing, production and distribution during 2022.

### Events and Notices - *Margaret Ning, Eleanor Galvin*

Our *Events and Notices* is now a regular update on upcoming events and other notices that we are aware of. The text is prepared from information provided by event organisers and other sources and emailed out about once a month to everyone on the FOG email mailing list, including non-members. In 2022 there were ten issues.

### Special Releases - *Margaret Ning, Eleanor Galvin*

In 2022 five *Special Releases* were distributed. Topics in these were: our AGM, a special appeal for donations, advertising for a FOG project officer, notice of funerals for Dave Mallison and Don Wood and seeking submissions for North Lawson grasslands.

### Facebook report - *Rainer Rehwinkel*

The FOG Facebook page, that is, its landing page, has 761 likes and 916 followers.

Facebook posts performance reports for the FOG Facebook page on 28-day and 90-day intervals. In the 28 days between 6 January and 2 February our page had a reach of 1.6K post hits, with a total of 708 engagements (likes, comments, etc).

Over the 90 days between 5 November and 2 February the FOG Facebook page has had a reach of 4.4K post hits, with 2.1K engagements.

This is the first report to the AGM of the Facebook page's performance, and figures presented here will hopefully provide something of a baseline for future comparisons.

### Email, phone and press inquiries: Info line – *Janet Russell*

FOG has several email addresses through which it receives various inquiries, but most come through [info@fog.org.au](mailto:info@fog.org.au). It receives several notices weekly of upcoming events, news reports and inquiries. Incoming information on events and news items is passed on appropriately, while inquiries are answered. Some members whose names are well known are often contacted to answer inquiries.

### Website - *Richard Bomford*

2022 was another smooth year for the FOG website. Most work involved keeping the calendar, newsletters, and advocacy pages up to date.

The statistics package on the server computers recorded about 115,000 visits and 80 GB in downloads. Those numbers probably include automated ‘visits’ from web crawlers – programs including those that update the databases held by Google and other search engines – so they aren’t the number of what we might refer to as ‘visitors’. But probably the year-on-year figures have some bearing on whether the site is getting more or less visited. On that basis, the number of visitors is staying about the same, year-on-year.

Apart from the home page, the information page What is a grassland? was the most popular page on the site (about 1% of visits), followed by the Supported Projects page (also about 1%). The resources pages, How can I get help for grasslands? and Grasses of NSW, and the newsletter, calendar and advocacy pages each got about 0.5% of visits.

The [fog.org.au](http://fog.org.au) domain is registered with OnlyDomains, the website is hosted by HostMetro in the USA, and FOG email services are provided faultlessly and free of charge by Google.

## Activities – Home and Away – *Geoff Robertson*

### FOG-driven

FOG’s activities in 2022 saw serious disruption, including postponement and cancellation due to the influence of La Niña conditions. We still managed to visit nine places, which included four that were out of town, although those latter activities were the most challenging to schedule. Attendance at activities is still affected by COVID concerns and is relatively low. We called off the end-of-year FOG celebration due to low numbers. However, the following activities went ahead during the year:

February – visit to three local microforests in Watson, Downer and Lyneham

March – visits to four of Michael Mulvaney’s conservation areas (Bass Gardens, Hughes open space, Dawson Street Park and Fowles Place Woodland)



Visit to southside urban volunteer conservation areas. Fowles Street Park Woodland Restoration, Weston ACT. March 2022



April - weekend away to a peaceful 50-acre property in the Creewah area (but nearby Nunnock Swamp was dropped due to the weather and road conditions)

May - exploring the Bush Heritage property of Scottsdale near Bredbo

July - a couple of O'Malley 'empty embassy blocks' that are NCA Conservation Sites

August - post-fire visits to our own Budjan Galindji Grassland Nature Reserve and the nearby Gungahlin Hill Nature Reserve forest area

September - Wagga Wagga forum on the management of native grasslands

November - the offset patch of Jarramlee Nature Reserve, where we were the last group to hear Ranger Craig's interpretative tour of the management issues there

In addition to activities, Andrew Zelnik and I also made a handful of visits to prospective locations for future FOG activities, and generally compiled a species list while there

Thank you to those who raised the idea for activities, and/or subsequently led them on the day.

### Jointly-driven

FOG also welcomes opportunities to work with other groups on matters and topics of mutual interest, including giving talks and staffing public displays. These are all useful for spreading an understanding of grassy ecosystems and building networks. The following are some events where FOG co-organised or participated in events organised by others in 2022.

On 22 February Geoff Robertson gave a presentation to Sutton Landcare Group on *Reconnecting people and nature - Friends of Grasslands experience*. On 22 March, he gave a presentation on *Hints on identifying grasses* to the Small Farms Capital Region Network. This was followed by his and Margaret Ning's participation in a field day to identify grasses.

FOG participated in organising the well-attended Conservation Council Rally to Save Lawson Grassland on 7 May. FOG members Jamie Pittock and Rainer Rehwinkel spoke at the rally. FOG members also participated in a rally outside the offices of the Defence Housing Australia. And FOG organised a table at the Conservation Council's annual dinner held on 4 June.



FOG President, Jamie Pittock, speaking (rear centre right) at rally outside North Lawson site, ACT. May 2022.



On Sunday 5 June Suzanne Orr MLA, ACT Parks Rangers and Friends of Grasslands held a planting day at Budjan Galindji Reserve. It was well-attended by many local residents and replaced a COVID-cancelled cleanup day planned for March.

On 20 July, Geoff Robertson co-led a guided walk with Sally Holliday at Mulanggari Grasslands as part of the ACT Landcare Wellbeing Program.

FOG participated in an annual display organised by local ParkCare groups at Jamison shopping centre from 16-18 September.

Several FOG members attended the Grassland Management Forum on 29 and 30 September, organised by Grassland Management Unit, Charles Stuart University, Wagga Wagga. Geoff Robertson gave a presentation on *Introduction to our native grasslands & why are they important*, and Kath McGuirk gave presentations on *Yass Area Network*.

On 8 October, Geoff Robertson led a *Walking tour of Mugga Mugga cottage grasslands, Symonston* during the ACT Historic Places' Bloom Festival.

On 16 October, FOG members participated in a day out to Sweeney's TSR approximately 10 kms north of Bungendore, as FOG's contribution to Nature Conservation Council's 'Statewide Picnic for Nature'.

On 4 November, Jamie Pittock hosted a guided walk at Gurubung Dhaura organised by the Australian Conservation Foundation.

On 26 November, FOG members attended the Sustainable Lands Project *Monaro grasslands bus tour to Adminaby Golf Course grassland and Top Hut Travelling Stock Reserve*.

### **Workshops and forums via Zoom or in person - Geoff Robertson**

The previous annual report reported on a COVID initiative to conduct a series of webinars on items of interest - some of these were conducted in partnership with the Victorian Grassland Investigation Group. In 2022 only one session was held. This was a combined GIG/FOG webinar on *Native terrestrial orchids commonly found in grasslands and woodlands* by Geoff Robertson.

No presentations are planned for 2023.

## **On-ground work and projects**

### **Blue Gum Point - Jamie Pittock**

FOG received a third (FY23) ACT Environment grant to restore the ACT City Services land at Blue Gum Point, adjoining Gurubang Dhaura. Our contractor and volunteers have made good progress felling riparian woody weeds but more is required. Part of the weeded area has been replanted by FOG volunteers and the seedlings are thriving. An ecological burn is planned for 2023 to control grass biomass. Since City Services stopped mowing the site at our request, some 250 new woodland trees have grown.

### **Budjan Galindji (Franklin) Grasslands Nature Reserve- Margaret Ning**

All 22 FOG work parties held at Budjan Galindji Nature Reserve in 2022 were held in the 1.5ha pocket of good quality grassland in the south-east corner of the reserve. This is where the Golden Sun Moth and Striped Legless Lizard populations are healthy, and grassland forbs are still prominent. So where better for an ecological burn? And on 21 March 2022, all 1.5ha were burnt.

Two 'fire effects' happened at the site. First there was the obvious one of reducing the biomass so that new germination occurred in the inter-tussock spaces, and second, the more ecological effect of having a more enhanced post-fire germination experience by some species. Blue Devil (*Eryngium ovinum*), Slender Tick-Trefoil (*Desmodium varians*) and Variable Glycine (*Glycine tabacina*) were excellent examples of that, as was Yorkshire Fog (*Holcus lanatus*), sadly.

Other post-fire surprises that we added to the reserve's species list, were Small Vanilla Lily, (*Arthropodium minus*), Early Nancy (*Wurmbea dioica*), Fringe Lily (*Thysanotus tuberosus*), Grass Lily (*Caesia calliantha*), Kidney Weed (*Dichondra repens*), Rock Fern (*Cheilanthes sieberi*), Bears Ear (*Cymbonotus* sp.), Scaly Buttons (*Leptorhynchus squamatus*), Cotton Fireweed (*Senecio quadridentatus*) and Native Plantain (*Plantago varia*), including a colony of a brighter green, virtually notchless, hairless form.

The government offsets team looks after us very well, mowing our pocket corner from time to time, occasionally whipper-snipping when that's less damaging than mowing, hand weeding the St Johns Wort rather than spraying Starane, spraying occasional blackberry, supervising corporate volunteers who like to plant things, and last, but certainly not least, installing a pedestrian gate close to where we work.

One of our volunteers recently said that she could not see across our little pocket last year because of the height and density of the Phalaris and Cocksfoot in places, whereas this year it is a much more open area with lower vegetation. That was a pleasing anecdotal report, and validation that our strategy of focussing on the larger exotic grasses is working. The St Johns Wort problem continues to expand and we have pulled many plants this season as we struggle to decide how best to deal with it. It is very easy to see the benefits of whipper snipping on annual grasses like Vulpia and Wild Oats, so more of that next year would be good.

The Striped Legless Lizards still have enough habitat, and Golden Sun Moth numbers are also fine for the season.

Thank you to Rangers Maree and Stephen, and to our extremely dedicated team of volunteers, an average of six to eight of whom turn up to our regular work parties.

### **Bush on the Boundary West Belconnen – John Fitz Gerald**

The suburb of Strathnairn is now largely developed, and the Conservation Corridor separating the homes and streets from the Murrumbidge River being managed and slowly opened for public access by the Ginninderry Conservation Trust. The Bush on the Boundary group met monthly in 2022, settling into a schedule of formal meetings alternating with general discussion or field visits. Once again matters raised were issues from both the Conservation Corridor and the suburban areas. Building has now commenced in the second suburb of Macnamara.

### **Ginninderry Conservation Trust 'scrape' monitoring – John Fitz Gerald**

The vegetation was surveyed again this year on 5 December by four FOG volunteers and two of the staff from the Ginninderry Conservation Trust. Transects were measured earlier on 11 November. Scheduling was quite a challenge with the wet weather making the Corridor Track impassable. Vegetation cover is still slowly building in the scrape, but unfortunately some of that is from exotics which now include minor presence of African Lovegrass. The Trust is warmly thanked for its generous donation to FOG to acknowledge the cooperation.

### **Hall Cemetery - *John Fitz Gerald***

FOG ran four scheduled work events in the woodland around the Cemetery during 2022 - a total of 90 hours of effort. In addition, individuals visited on a few other occasions adding 30 more hours of weeding effort. The challenge remains of keeping under control a significant area that is thickly vegetated in places with just this much effort. But there are some nice areas in the woodland as a result of our volunteer effort. In late October two FOG members visited the soggy site with Canberra Memorial Parks and Conservation Research staff to discuss management problems and possible ways forward for coming years.

### **National Lands – *Jamie Pittock and John Fitz Gerald***

In our fourteenth year of volunteer work to restore the grassy woodlands at Gurubang Dhaura – Stirling Park and the grasslands at Yarramundi Reach, 174 FOG volunteers devoted 515 hours in 18 work parties. FOG has now held 151 work parties since 2009 for the conservation of the flora and fauna of these public lands in central Canberra. A third year of La Niña conditions contributed to recovery of the grassy ecosystem vegetation but exacerbated the dire weed management challenge. Unfavourable weather and logistical challenges prevented the National Capital Authority (NCA) undertaking controlled burns at both sites, leaving extremely high levels of grass biomass that threatens to diminish biodiversity unless it can be reduced in the coming year.

FOG was awarded an ACT National Trust Heritage award for our work restoring these grassy ecosystems. We thank the NCA for excellent collaboration and for the \$6,000 in support for our work parties, and the ACT Government for supporting restoration at Blue Gum Point.

### **Gurubung Dhaura (Stirling) Park – *Jamie Pittock***

Work in 2022 focussed on supplementing and maintaining plantings of degraded lands across the park with indigenous species and weeding Vinca. FOG and the NCA have collaborated to control weeds across the 52 hectares. The park remains zoned for 'national capital purposes' and FOG has raised the need to reserve the lands from development.

### **Yarramundi Grassland – *John Fitz Gerald***

At Yarramundi Reach work continued to control key weeds and restore degraded patches across the 21 hectare site. FOG's efforts focused on follow-up work on the 'scrape' demonstration, weed control and monitoring. The pilot scraping of weed infested topsoil at two sites has led to the welcome establishment of a number of wildflower and native grass species from freshly sown seed. Wet weather has greatly exacerbated the need for more weed control and for ecological burning. St Johns Wort, in particular, has run out of control and is back to numbers not seen there for a decade.

### **Lindsay Pryor Arboretum, Yarramundi - *John Fitz Gerald***

No activity to report in 2022.

### **Old Cooma Common Grassland Reserve – *Margaret Ning***

We did not have a FOG presence at Old Cooma Common Grassland Reserve in 2022

### **'Scottsdale' Monitoring – *Linda Spinaze***

Our monitoring this year was delayed from November to 2<sup>nd</sup> December due to other monitoring commitments. However, we managed to choose a perfect day – sunny, warm, no rain nor wind.

FOG volunteers met at Scottsdale before 9am – Margaret Ning, Geoff Robertson and Sabina, their friend from NY, Brigitta Wimmer, Andrew Zelnik, Peter Chandler, and myself. The team was completed by Kim and Donna, Bush Heritage ecologists, and Matt Kent who spends a day each week volunteering on Scottsdale.



This time we were fortunate to be monitoring some sites up on the hill on the western part of Scottsdale. This involved a rough drive on the recently rain-affected tracks, but the views from the top were spectacular, so we were able to enjoy the fabulous views while we worked.

We divided into two groups, and each group had a 50m square site already marked out by Donna and Kim. Within this square we had to identify all the species that we could find, both native and exotic. While a few of us did this, Kim, and Donna, with help from Marg and Matt, closely monitored 4 x 1m quadrats at each site. We were excited to find one faded sun-orchid (*Thelymitra* sp.), the large-leaved *Desmodium brachypodium* and a few non-flowering *Swainsona* sp.

A delicious sandwich and cake lunch was provided by Bush Heritage, and we enjoyed it with views to the east over Scottsdale. Returning to base late in the afternoon was quite exciting as we descended very steeply back to the valley floor. Thanks to Phil Palmer (Scottsdale Manager), Kim and Donna for providing us with an enjoyable and informative day.



Annual monitoring at Bush Heritage Australia's 'Scottsdale' property, Bredbo, NSW. L-R Kim, Matt, Peter, and Linda. Looking north to the Murrumbidgee River in the background. December 2022.

### Top Hut Travelling Stock Reserve (TSR) – Margaret Ning

Top Hut TSR, between Cooma and Adaminaby, is a 15ha high conservation grassland on which FOG has had a five-year lease since July 2020.

In 2022, FOG held working bees in January, March, September, November, and December with the two earlier work parties pursuing the same weeds as in the past, while all the time watching the vegetation on the TSR thicken up following three La Niña seasons. The NSW Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) subsequently decided there was a need for biomass reduction on the site to enhance the Monaro Grassland Earless Dragon habitat there. After widespread consultation with FOG, South-East Local Land Services, and other interested parties, DPE decided on an ecological burn, and effectively the whole of the southern side of the TSR (c. 7.5ha) was burnt on 9 August. Since then, our main work party targets have been re-emerging Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), Cats Ear (*Hypochaeris radicata*), Salsify (*Tragopogon dubius*), Smooth Hawksbeard (*Crepis capillaris*) with occasional small patches of St Johns Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) and Sulphur Cinquefoil

(*Potentilla recta*) when encountered. Exotic grasses like Fog (*Holcus lanatus*) and Sweet Vernal (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*) are also targeted where appropriate.

In spring the 1150m site was an amazing wash of yellow as Billy Button (*Craspedia variabilis*), Australian Buttercup (*Ranunculus lappaceus*), Yam Daisy (*Microseris lanceolata*), Small Snake Orchid (*Diuris subalpina*) and two Leptorhynchos species (*L. squamatus*) and (*L. elongatus*) lit it up. It was a sight to behold! However, we also became more aware of the large number of Dandelion and Cats Ear on parts of the site and we have begun targeted spraying of those species, including by bush regen sprayers paid out of the Top Hut public fund. These species are more visible post fire, so the timing is right.

A huge thank you goes to all our volunteers, 14 different FOG members, some of whom were able to attend all five work parties in 2022; to our bush regen sprayers; and finally, to the generous donors to the FOG public fund who nominated Top Hut to receive their donation.

We welcome all visitors to the site, whether curious to see what is there, or to join in our work parties.



Top Hut TSR, Dry Plain NSW. Ecological burn early August, and work party amongst wildflowers November.

## FOG Supported Projects (FSP) Sub-Committee report -

*Andrew Zelnik*

In 2022 the FSP Sub-Committee ran its sixth annual round of Grassy Ecosystem Grants, again offering grants of \$500 to \$1,500 each, to promote FOG's objectives and priorities in relation to the understanding, conservation, and management of native grassy ecosystems. We are again grateful for the generous donations made to Public Fund which mostly fund these grants.

This year, again aided by yet another further widening of our external advertising net, we were pleased to receive seven applications for grants totalling \$10,081 (six for \$1,500, one for \$1,081), and once again well in excess of our \$5,000 annual budget maximum. They involved a mix of on-ground projects, research, and education - two from Victoria, four from NSW, and a first from Queensland. This year's applications resulted solely from external advertising - in prior years some have also come from internal advertising to FOG members.

Thank you to my FSP Sub-committee colleagues, Ken Hodgkinson and newcomers Alice Hathorn and David Johnson, for their assistance with assessing the 2022 applications. A big thank you also to Janet Russell who stepped back from involvement this year. Her able and diligent assistance since 2017 has been invaluable. This year the decision process was a bit easier. Committee approved our recommendation of grant offers (\$1,500 each) to four applicants, three to come from the Public Fund and one from the Publications Account. The four offers have been accepted by the applicants. Details of the awarded grant projects are provided in the January-February 2023 newsletter.

Four 2021 grants remain to be acquitted. In 2022 FOG paid out \$3,000 to 2022 grantees - \$1,500 from the Public Fund and \$1,500 from the Publications Account. At year end the Public Fund balance had \$4,179 allocated to grassy ecosystem grants versus \$4,500 in grant payments (one 2021, two 2022) yet to be made. Details of all grants funded to date can be accessed via the [grants webpage](#).

## Membership – *Heather Sweet*

At the end of 2022 FOG had 218 members, a slight decrease from 2021. Most FOG members are individuals or families - landowners and managers, professional scientists, land and park carers, conservationists and naturalists. There were also five corporate entities and 11 not-for-profit organisations with FOG membership.

## Book sales - *Sarah Sharp*

Sales continue, with 247 Woodland Flora and 201 Grassland Flora books sold or given away in 2022. Many are sold at wholesale prices throughout the region, through the Local Landcare Services, which results in a wide distribution of the information. We also have sold small numbers of other books, including the *Field Guide to Plants of the Molonglo Valley* (Barrett, Cosgrove, and Milner), an excellent guide to many plants in the region, with fantastic photographs. Order forms for all these books are available on the FOG website. Publications funds were used to support a 2022 project through FOG's grassy ecosystems grants program (see FOG Supported Projects (FSP) Sub-Committee report by Andrew). Other funding is used to print copies of the books as they run out.





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