

News of Friends of Grasslands

Volume 1 Issue 3

24 March 1995

FOG membership now totals 115



Committees are a great way to learn—see insert



Sunday 9 April 10 am members' meeting ANBG

All FOG members are invited to the Theatre at the Australian National Botanic Gardens' Visitor Information Centre, Canberra, for our second members' meeting, followed by lunch from 1 pm.

We need to make progress on formalising FOG's structure and goals, so that we can tackle the many challenges facing FOG.

Until we get some sub-committees up and running we can't harness the skills and interests of our members properly and FOG's ability to achieve things will remain limited.

And the more we spread the load, the better FOG will work.

Why not join a committee in a field that interests you? Choose from the enclosed list of possible committees.

Even if you're not an expert, being part of a team is a great way to learn about grasslands.

And if you can't make the 9 April meeting, don't worry—just mail or fax the enclosed sheet to indicate which committee you'd like to be part of.

Remember, the more people get involved the lighter the load each person has to carry. Avoid burn-out and have more fun!

Friday 21 April 6 pm FOG committees meet

If we do establish some sub-committees at the 9 April meeting, we'll have an evening get-together on Friday 21 April at Edwina's place to meet each other and get ideas rolling.

Meet at Unit 122 Monterey Apartments, 14 Boolee Street, Reid ACT (phone

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(06)257 8668) at 6 pm for drinks, and stay on for dinner if you are free.

ANBG grasslands display

The Australian National Botanic Gardens in Canberra is mounting a display on Australia's grasslands, due to start in early April and run for several months. The display should be up in time for our 9 April members' meeting, so FOG members can take in the display on that day.

The display will provide an introduction to several types of grasslands, including Spinifex (arid zones of central and western Australia), Mitchell (Queensland and Northern Territory), Kangaroo (temperate south-eastern Australia), alpine tussock and coastal.

ACT grasslands will get a mention, as will Aboriginal use of grasslands and the impact of European settlement.

In consultation with ANBG, FOG will be staging several activities for the general public to coincide with the display. We're still working on the details, but stay tuned—we'll let you know at the members' meeting.



Golden Sun Moth T shirt a possibility

Golden Sun Moth sighted! Field trip report

Thankyou to the many FOG members who collected seed of *Danthonia carphoides* at the Belconnen Naval Radio Station on 12 December. FOG now has a healthy quantity of seed—our inaugural deposit in the FOG seed bank.

As if to let us know our efforts on its behalf were appreciated, a gorgeous little female Golden Sun Moth (*Synemon plana*) appeared, shimmering in the late afternoon sun. For most of us this was the first time we had seen the moth except in books—a rare treat and an auspicious beginning to FOG activities.

FOG member, Mary Ormay, captured it on film and we may be able to have souvenir prints for sale at the 9 April meeting. Perhaps even a Golden Sun Moth T shirt!



Remnants at risk— response team needed

If FOG is to get serious about grassland conservation, we need to develop a remnant rescue response team procedure.

We have already received our first remnant rescue call, from someone who is concerned that a particular good quality remnant is at risk and would like FOG to act.

But as yet we are not well set up to respond quickly and professionally. Developing a sound procedure for responding to such calls should be an early priority for FOG.

Ideally we need a team of people who can -

- visit the site promptly
- assess its condition, including identifying species present
- establish its ownership and zoning, and map its boundaries
- check existing registers of grassland sites, to see if it is already known to conservation authorities
- with FOG approval, initiate discussions with the relevant authorities and the landholder to explore appropriate protection for the site.



Could you help with remnants?

While speed of response is important, the professionalism of our response is equally vital. Going off half cocked will not help the grasslands.

We need to be able to present accurate data and well-reasoned arguments if we are to get results.

And we need to ensure we are not re-inventing the wheel. Swift liaison with all relevant agencies will be needed, so we don't re-do work others have already done.

Could you help with this work?

This may be the most important part of FOG's role, and we just can't do it without the right skills. Please consider being part of the Remnants Sub-committee, so we can get this task underway.

1996 FOG grasslands conference

FOG has applied for a grant under the 1995 ACT Community Vegetation Management Program (an ACT component of the National Landcare Program) to organise a major grasslands conference in Spring 1996. Corporate sponsorship will also be sought.

We propose a conference aimed at non-experts, particularly those in the community who may be inadvertently harming grasslands or missing opportunities to use, protect or enjoy grasslands.

The target audience would include hobby farmers and other rural sectors, town planners, Landcare and conservation groups, educators, and landscapers and horticulturalists. A three day conference is envisaged incorporating a field trip program.

Competition for Landcare funding is said to be particularly tough this year, so keep your fingers crossed. We'll keep you posted.

ACT State of the Environment Report

FOG met with Dr Joe Baker, Commissioner for the Environment in the ACT,

with other community representatives in March to discuss issues for the second ACT State of the Environment Report.

Dr Baker is considering a case study on lowland grasslands for the upcoming report, which would give welcome prominence to grassland issues.

Roadsides management workshop

On 21 March the Landcare Sub-committee of the ACT Environment and Conservation Consultative Committee held a workshop aimed at developing a workable strategy for managing roadsides in the ACT.

Invitees represented a wide range of interests including roads and transport, public works, landscaping, stormwater, town planning, fire services, electricity and telephone supply, conservation and wildlife, weed management, heritage, farming, Landcare, sport and recreation, and tourism.

FOG was unable to attend because of limited places, but sent a short submission outlining some of the issues for lowland native grasslands remnants.

FOG display

FOG had a small information display on 20 March, when community groups of all sorts gathered on the lawns of the Old Parliament House in Canberra to showcase their attractions to the public.

The Society for Growing Australian Plants kindly offered FOG free space in its information tent this year. Next year FOG will be aiming to have its own tent and a larger display.

Politics

FOG's Interim Committee is writing to all those who won seats in the recent ACT elections, to brief them on the need for action on lowland grasslands (several of them are already FOG members), and will also look at contacting relevant NSW politicians.

We had sent a briefing package to the

Moore Independents party in advance of the ACT elections (having sent background on FOG to most MLAs back in November), and were gratified to see the creation of grassland reserves appear on the party's platform. (Not that we can necessarily take credit for that—others had also pushed the grasslands issue.)

FOG leaflets also went out to relevant federal ministers and opposition MPs and senators last year, plus several local government councils and rural organisations. But there is much more to be done.

Are your local MPs, Councillors and conservation groups tuned in to grasslands?

If not, why not drop them a line, enclosing a FOG leaflet. Or let the FOG Interim Committee know and we'll write to them.

Inner city grasslands garden

Last year—thanks to creative thinking by Environment Centre President, Michael Hissink—a grasslands garden was planted on a vacant burnt-out inner city Canberra site using community and work-experience volunteers.

Now FOG member Graeme Gibson, who helped manage that project, would like to hear from any FOG member interested in teaming up with Graeme to spruce up the garden and enhance its potential as an educational resource. If you'd like to lend a hand, phone Graeme on (06) 257 7438 h.

Native grasses at Floriade?

The Australian National Botanic Gardens and the Society for Growing Australian Plants (Canberra Region) have been invited to create a native garden at Floriade this year, following the success of their native garden at Floriade '94.

Negotiations are still underway, but the inclusion of native grasses is actively being discussed. Sourcing advanced specimens is a hurdle yet to be overcome, but subject to that the chances of native grasses scoring a small place at Canberra's premier floral festival look good. Half a million people visit Floriade during September-October, an audience not to be sneezed at.



Grasslands from the ashes



Grassland plants for sale

If you were intrigued by Tod Layt's talk on 8 December on the Viro-Cell method of growing native grasses but just want to buy a small quantity, you'll be pleased to know that Gurawin Native Nursery in Canberra is getting stocks in from Tod. These have just arrived and are available now from Gurawin (phone/fax (06) 251 1043).

Species available are *Themeda triandra*, *Danthonia* spp. (mix of five species) and *Poa labillardieri* (all local Canberra provenance) and *Microlaena stipoides* (Bowral provenance). Local provenance *Chionocloa pallida* may be available later this year. Prices start at 50 cents per plant for small quantities and from 30 cents per plant for larger quantities.

Gurawin propagates some local grassland herbs itself, so if you're planning a grasslands garden ask about these as well.

A list of nurseries selling grassland species will be compiled for the Botanic Gardens' grasslands display, and should be available from April. A limited list is already available from the Society for Growing Australian Plants.

Grassland harvesters

Edwina would love to hear from you (phone (06) 257 8668) if you know of any grassland harvester machines in use or being designed or trialled. We'd like to profile different harvesting techniques in a future newsletter.

Grassland publications

Enclosed is *Australian grasslands*, a leaflet just released by the Federal Government's Australian Nature Conservation Agency. It is available from ANCA and from the Australian National Botanic Gardens' Visitor Information Centre.

Also enclosed is a mail-order form for *Conservation of Lowland Native Grasslands in South-Eastern Australia*. Published May 1994 by World Wide Fund for Nature, this book provides an excellent introduction to the subject. It combines up-to-date scien-

tific data with text understandable to non-experts. If you're an amateur wanting to get serious about grassland issues, this should be in your bookcase.

Field Guide to Victoria's Native Grasslands edited by Neville Scarlett (1992 Victoria Press) provides colour photographs of over 100 plants native to Victoria's lowland plains - of which around 65 are also native to the ACT region - with good introductions and appendices on conservation issues. Can still be found in some book stores, priced around \$20.

For those interested in the ACT, the following two books are useful additions. *The Conservation of Remnant Woodland and Native Grassland in the ACT* by Kevin Frawley (1991 National Parks Association of the ACT) can still be found in some stores (under \$10).

The ACT's Native Grasslands is the proceedings of a 1991 workshop organised by the Conservation Council of the South East Region and Canberra. FOG has a few copies available at \$8 (plus postage if you'd like it mailed).

If you know of useful grassland books, please let us know and we'll publicise them in the newsletter.

Your contact details

May we reveal your contact details to other FOG members?

Members have expressed interest in being able to get in touch directly with other FOG members who live in their region or who share particular skills or interests in grassland issues.

We held back from including contact details in the Members' Profile enclosed with our first newsletter, in case some members would prefer their contact details not to be revealed. But it would certainly facilitate exchange of ideas if we could do so—a sort of grasslands bush telegraph.

Please let us know your wishes by completing the enclosed slip and returning it to FOG.

Grasses from 30 cents



WWF book a 'must have'



Committees you can join

Outlined in this insert are suggested FOG Committees. On the reverse of this page, please tick the appropriate box and return the slip to FOG at the 9 April meeting or mail or fax to :

*Edwina Barton,
Interim Convenor
Friends of
Grasslands
Unit 122 Monterey
Apartments
14 Boolee St REID
ACT 2601*

*phone
(06) 257-8668
fax (06) 257-8117*

Executive Committee (8-12 members)

Responsible for the overall management of FOG. To include one representative from each of the following committees, making a maximum of 12 people in all.

Conservation Committee (eg 6 members)

Role—

- identify and assess remnants, including responding to 'remnant rescue' calls, perhaps by means of a Remnants Subcommittee
- recommend to the Executive Committee what action is needed to protect remnants at risk
- build up a database of remnants, including species lists, maps, photographs etc., using pre-existing databases where possible
- lead field trips to remnants when appropriate
- create and maintain a database of federal, state and local government laws and policies relevant to the conservation of lowland grasslands in south-eastern Australia
- liaise with others working on conservation of lowland grasslands
- contribute to FOG lobbying, liaison and education strategies

Education Committee (eg 5 members)

Role—

- recommend to the Executive Committee what education, information and awareness strategies FOG should pursue—
 - for the general community
 - for particular community sectors eg rural, schools
 - to meet the needs of FOG's own members

- as part of those strategies, through a Poster Working Group develop a full colour grasslands poster (on the terms and conditions for which funding has been offered for this task)
- build up and maintain a collection of publications, articles, photographs, videos, living and dried specimens, etc. which can contribute to those education strategies
- with the approval of the Executive Committee, secure media coverage including writing articles for magazines and newspapers, taking publicity photographs, contacting TV and radio producers etc.
- in consultation with other FOG committees, promote FOG membership to all relevant community sectors

Lobbying and Liaison Committee (eg 4 members)

Role—

- help FOG to pursue its goals through liaison with other sectors of the community not directly involved in the work of the Conservation, Education and Landscaping/Horticulture Committees, including—
 - rural organisations and communities
 - government
 - grassland groups elsewhere in Australia
 - Landcare groups
 - scientists
 - the corporate sector
- advise the Executive Committee on opportunities to secure funding by way of grants, corporate sponsorship and other means
- with the Executive Committee's approval, actively pursue those opportunities
- recommend to the Executive Committee lobbying strategies as needed to pursue FOG's goals

Landscaping and Horticulture Committee (eg 3 members)

Role—

- in consultation with the Education Committee, devise strategies to encourage the use of lowland grassland species in public and private landscaping (including parks, roadsides etc.)
- review government policies on landscaping, and advise the Executive Committee whether FOG should seek amendment to these
- encourage the propagation of lowland grassland species by FOG members, commercial nurseries, schools and others
- create and maintain a seed bank
- oversight seed collection on field trips
- in consultation with the Education Committee provide, or arrange for, education for FOG members on techniques for species identification, seed collection, propagation and landscaping with grassland species
- seek to have lowland grasslands included in tertiary education courses on landscaping and horticulture

Newsletter Committee (eg 1-2 people)

Role: produce, print and mail the FOG Newsletter including

- write and edit text
- design layout, including graphics
- liaise with WP/DTP bureau (or use own PC) to produce camera-ready
- arrange printing
- maintain member database, and list of 'freebie' mailouts eg libraries
- arrange mailing

Constitutional and Incorporation Working Group (eg 2 members)

Role: in consultation with the Executive Committee—

- with the assistance of a draft constitutional structure already created by FOG member Graeme Evans, prepare a draft Constitution for consideration by the membership

- with the approval of the membership, work towards the incorporation of FOG under the ACT Associations Incorporation Act

I am interested in being part of the following committees— please tick box(es).

Executive Committee

- Co-ordinator
- Deputy Co-ordinator
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Assistant Secretary/Treasurer
- Other members

Other committees

- Conservation
 - Remnants Sub-Committee
- Education
 - Poster Working Group
- Lobbying and Liaison
- Landscaping and Horticulture
- Newsletter
- Constitutional and Incorporation

Your contact details

- YES, you may reveal my contact details to other FOG members
- NO, I would prefer you not reveal my contact details to other FOG members

signed

name:

date : / / 95