

News of Friends of Grasslands

July 1998

Upcoming events

7am, Saturday 25 July - Breakfast at Mulligan's Flat

Drag out the winter woollies for our winter grassland visit in late July. Mulligan's Flat contains areas of native grassland with Themeda and Danthonia, plus open forest and woodland areas, and is reasonably weed free. It has many rare and unusual plants and animals.

This may be the first visit to Mulligan's Flat for some of you, so the following instructions are intended to get you there in plenty of time for breakfast at 7am!! Head out along Gundaroo Rd towards Gundaroo. Once you hit the gravel, drive for 4.1kms till you reach a Mulligan's Flat sign and carpark on the left side of the road. (Along the way you will pass a couple of farm houses, pine trees on the right near another Mulligan's Flat sign, and another farm house.)

Rug up well with good boots, beanies, gloves, etc. and don't forget your binoculars. Please note the following changed contact details: RSVP to Naarilla Hirsch by 18 July to help with breakfast planning. (Work phone 6289 8499 or email, NAARILLA.HIRSCH @health.gov.au]

2pm, Saturday 29 August - Slide/chat Afternoon

An indoor activity for the middle of winter. Half a dozen FOG members will give short presentations on different aspects of grasslands: grassland plant communities, grassland invertebrates, grassland reptiles, etc. Come and have a look at good examples of the tools being used in grassland analysis, e.g. a herbarium, species lists, etc.

7.30pm, Thursday 24 September Workshop on Grassland Plant ID

This workshop will discuss ideas on how to identify species at a site, document them and other site features, evaluate the site and sug-

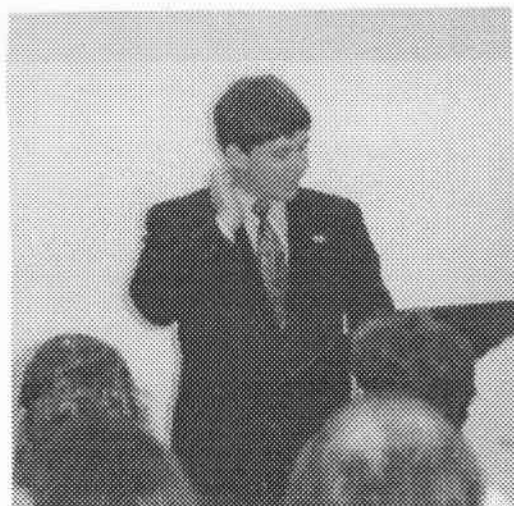
Inside This Issue

- Workshop a big success - article by Art Langston
- Growing native grasses for commercial gain - article by John Betts
- Catchment Management Plan Report

gest further work and management strategies. We will be attempting to look at various methods of site documentation developed by others as well as general brainstorming. The aim is to gain more knowledge and be of more assistance to landcare groups and landowners wanting to know if they have a remnant grassland, how much diversity is present and possible options for management.

Helix Grassland Feature Give Away

We were given a number of Helix Magazines to give away at the recent grasslands workshop. Helix is the primary communication from the CSIRO science group Double Helix. The issue contained a feature called "Life & Death in the Grass" which highlighted a number of threatened and endangered grasslands species. We have included the feature with this newsletter as we thought it would interest all FOG members. Thanks to David Salt of CSIRO Wildlife & Ecology for supplying the magazine.



For catering for Mulligan's Flat please RSVP to Naarilla by 18 July.

For information about any activities (including times and venues), please phone Margaret Ning on 6241 4065 (home)

Good TV and Radio Coverage

Thanks to WIN and Prime for very good TV coverage and for doing a good job in getting the story of the workshop across. Both included interviews with Brendan Smyth. WIN also featured interviews with Charlie Litchfield, David Eddy and Geoff Robertson. Cathy van Extel's (2CN) morning show had a seven minute interview with Geoff Robertson (she also prepared well). Snapshots (ABC TV) also announced the workshop.

On grasslands

THE future use of grasslands will be discussed at a workshop hosted by the ACT conservation group Friends of Grasslands (FOG), on May 26 at CSIRO Wildlife and Ecology, in Canberra. The workshop will bring together scientists, government representatives and a range of people who have a stake in the native grasslands of the Southern Tablelands.

■ Contact Art Langston, (02) 6242 1632 (Biff) or (02) 6258 1032 (AH).

DATA

■ **LAWN LOVERS:** Like grass? Course you do. The Friends of Grasslands take this natural affection more seriously than

most, so much more that next Tuesday they are hosting a one-day workshop to discuss the future of grassland management.

To be opened by Urban Services Minister Brendan Smyth, the session at CSIRO Wildlife & Ecology at Gungahlin will hear from landholders, developers, conservationists and others. Attendance costs \$40, including lunch and a copy of proceedings. ☎ 6242 1632; e-mail: art.langston@dwe.csiro.au

Workshop to focus on the development of grasslands

LAND users will come together in Canberra later this month to discuss ways of planning for grassland development.

A one-day workshop, organised by the ACT conservation group Friends of Grasslands, will be held at CSIRO Wildlife and Ecology on May 26.

It will bring together scientists, government representatives and a range of people who have a stake in the native grasslands of the southern tablelands.

These include graziers and landholders, building industries, transport developers and conservation groups.

Friends of Grasslands convenor, Geoff Robertson, said the workshop would be the first time the different groups had met to discuss the conflicting uses of native grasslands.

Mr Robertson said there had been many cases of conflict in the development history of public grasslands.

These had included the NSW environmental planning policy (SEPP 14) which had restricted the clearing of native pasture.

He said the conflict had been caused by lack of communication as much as anything else.

Those people interested in attending the workshop have been asked to contact coordinator Art Langston on (02) 6242 1632 before 4pm on May 25.

Grass topic of forum

THE preservation of native grass species will be discussed at a special forum in the ACT on May 26.

Some Wollondilly and Camden residents are expected to attend the forum, the first to be organised between key landholders and green groups.

It will be held in the CSIRO's Wildlife and Ecology

Farmers meeting greenies

was aimed at finding ways to

"But as much as anything else, lack of communication causes conflict," he said.

"Both Territory and State Governments have worked hard to improve the consultation process with things like action plans for endangered species."

"Our aim is to create an

Call to come together on grasslands

ACT conservation group Friends of Grasslands

"FOG wants to know what makes a grassland

often talk with each other, we just don't know

that are neither accurate or helpful," Mr Robert-

son said. the cost of the workshop as low as possible.

It will cost \$15 to regis-

FOG on grasslands

CONSERVATION group Friends of Grasslands (FOG) invites members of the community to discuss the future use of grasslands at a one-day workshop on Tuesday, May 26, at CSIRO Wildlife

people who have a stake in the native grasslands of the southern tablelands. The aim is to plan for grassland development to avoid any future conflict.

The cost is \$15 to register before

Workshop Grabs Headlines

The newsclippings show extracts from press articles which announced the FOG workshop held on 26 May:

"On grasslands" the Land

"DATA" Canberra Times

"Workshop" Cooma-Monaro Express

"Grass topic ..." The Camden and Wollondilly Times

"Call to come together...." Summit Sun

"FOG on grasslands" Chronicle

The Summit Sun gave the best coverage. Some fun was had by the Canberra Times calling us lawn lovers. The Camden and Wollondilly Times summed up by saying "farmers meet greenies".

Copies of the proceedings from FOG's November 1996 conference are available for \$10 which includes postage and handling. Please contact Margaret Ning if you are interested.

Workshop a great success

Everyone who participated in the organisation of our recent grasslands workshop is very pleased with the event. The turnout was huge, with 120 people filling the room to the brim. Feedback from a lot of these people confirm that it was worth attending. Thankyou to those of you who supported our group by attending, and special thanks to all members who helped on the day (many of whom made large sacrifices to ensure that all went smoothly).

What did we achieve ?

- * Effective communication about what FOG is and the plight of native grasslands through extensive coverage in rural print media, radio and television news;
- * Dissemination of information on the value of grasslands, and of the research supporting the underlying issues. These ideas were communicated through posters, displays and spoken papers;
- * Building of networks and friendships among stakeholders and government agencies;
- * New ideas for working through conflicts where development is planned in proximity to native grasslands;
- * A long list of actions that need to be taken to ensure that things are done better in the future.

Where do we go from here ? Over the next few months a subgroup of committee members will work towards editing and preparing the proceedings from the workshop. The proceedings will include abstracts from posters, displays and presentations; the spoken papers; the tabularised list of action statements, successes and failures generated by the audience; and a similar list generated by the speakers. We also hope to respond to these outputs by formulating a FOG position statement on reducing conflict in association with development of native grasslands.

Art Langston



Photos from the workshop:

Page 1: Brendan Smyth, ACT Minister for Urban Services, opening workshop.

Top: Coffee break

Middle: Art Langston bringing it together

Bottom: Poster display in background



Catchment Management Plan for the Upper Murrumbidgee (CMPUM)

In April, FOG was asked to comment on the draft CMPUM, which is a four volume document. Volume I is an introduction and volumes II, III and IV give details for the upper, middle and lower Murrumbidgee catchments respectively. The draft CMPUM includes reference to major issues affecting grasslands and grassy ecosystems within this region. It makes much positive comment about conservation issues and the value of native grasslands and remnant vegetation in particular.

The plan provides a very good framework for considering economic and conservation issues, bringing together into a coherent whole the different levels that need to be considered: the catchment as a whole, sub-regions, and individual properties. The plan not only touches on a plethora of issues but also explains the links between them. It provides a wealth of information, including some insights that FOG may find useful, and clearly attempts to bring the values of different stakeholders into a coherent whole.

The background research seems to have been well done and obviously much effort has gone into it.

The document is useful in that it provides information on issues of importance to other groups and stakeholders (such as landholder groups and government agencies) involved in management of native vegetation remnants, includes proposals for future action and indicates those likely to be undertaking such action. The draft document is available from the FOG secretary.

- Naarilla

FOG posters

David Eddy, with the assistance of other committee members, has produced three posters for FOG to use as displays.

"Friends of Grasslands" describes FOG's objectives and activities, and is illustrated by three different grassland photos.

"What is a Grassland?" talks about what makes up a grassland or grassy woodland, and includes photographs of different grasslands and grassy woodlands. "Diversity in Grasslands" contains photographs of some of the different species found in grass-

lands, ranging from common species such as *Stackhousia monogyna* (Candles) and *Chrysocephalum apiculatum* (Yellow Buttons), to threatened species such as *Swainsona recta* (Small Purple Pea) and *Delmar impar* (Striped Legless Lizard). Many thanks to those who allowed photographs to be used in the posters: J. Baker, J. Briggs, J. Dorrough, D. Eddy, P. Ormay, W. Osborne, R. Rehwinkel, S. Sharp and J. Wombey.

These posters have already seen active service at our May workshop, been the central focus of FOG's World Environment Day presentation, and helped Geoff Robertson introduce FOG to the ACT Wildlife and Botanical Artists' Group (see page 6).

Environment Centre Garden

Five FOG members assisted 15 volunteers on April 4 in resurrecting a grassland garden at the Environment Centre. The garden was established some years ago as a joint effort of a number of organisations to illustrate grassland plants can be readily grown. The FOG volunteers needed to hone their ID skills quickly as some volunteers were a little too eager, but the end result was great. The more recently scheduled weeding day had to be postponed to a later date.

World Environment Day Fair

The World Environment Day Fair was held in Garema Place. The main feature of the FOG stand was the three grassland posters which caught the eye of passers-by and even a roving TV camera. Naarilla Hirsch, Kim Pullen and Dierk von Behrens were there to hand out leaflets on FOG and its activities, and to provide more information on grassland issues to those interested. As well as drawing grassland issues to the public's attention, the day provided opportunities to network with other environmentally-orientated groups and to discuss specific grasslands issues with some.

Domestication and the search for adapted grasses

Excerpt from Roberts B.R. (1995) *The quest for sustainable agriculture and land use*. UNSW Press, Sydney.

Australian researchers and advisers tend to prefer exotic grasses and legumes for improving pasture quality or revegetating
continued page 8

The plan provides a very good framework for considering economic and conservation issues

three grassland posters which caught the eye of passers-by and even a roving TV camera

Getting native grass seed for pasture, regeneration or even a lawn is difficult and expensive but the Southeast Growers of Native Grass Seeds hope to change all that. John Betts, a member of that group, tells of the strengths of some native grasses and the work to make the seed available on a commercial basis. An open day later in the year by the group will be advertised in our program - a marvellous opportunity to see how the project comes together.



Photo: Suction Harvester

NATIVE GRASS SEED

by John Betts

There has been increasing interest in the harvesting, sowing and management of native perennial grasses for sustainable grazing, salinity control and in urban situations, such as lawns and playing fields and in stabilising and revegetating earth works.

Considerable work has been done since 1993 in identifying and evaluating native perennial grasses. Various projects have been conducted under the banner of the Community Grasses Project and the LIGULE Project, both funded through the Murray-Darling Commission. Most of the work and project trials have been conducted in Southeastern Australia in NSW and Victoria.

Conventional seed harvesting machines were found to be unsuitable and caused damage to the seed, so two new machines have been developed.

They are the **Brush Harvester** for the taller grasses such as Wallaby Grass (*Danthonia spp.*) and the **Suction Harvester** (Bushranger Native Seed Harvester) for lower-growing grasses such as Weeping Rice Grass (*Microlaena spp.*).

Since the development of the harvesters, further research has been carried out by the NSW and Victorian Departments of Agriculture with the LIGULE Project and in field studies on various properties.

Professor Wal Whaley, New England University, working in conjunction with the Wrightson Seed Company, has spearheaded work into the commercial harvesting of native grass seed, and sowing and establishing techniques.

Grazing trials, fertilizer and weedicide evaluations are still being conducted.

The 1997-98 drought delayed some results and just about all harvesting of seed in the south eastern areas.

However, preliminary results suggested that controlled grazing (cell or rotational) of both *Danthonia* and *Microlaena* dominant pastures enhanced the growth and development of the grasses, and encouraged other species to be maintained.

It has also been discovered that by controlled grazing of such areas the actual growing period of these grasses can be extended by up to six weeks.

The wool fibre produced from these types of grasses has proven to be superior to the fibre produced from introduced species as the latter produces fluctuating growth patterns.

As far as *Themeda* (Kangaroo Grass) is concerned, it appears it will not survive severe or prolonged grazing, nor does it like fertilizer. However, with careful management, this grass can be encouraged to grow.

An open day later in the year by the group will be advertised in our program



Photo: the
Brush
Harvester

Winter burning of Themeda stands appears to enhance its growth and seed set the following summer. Because Themeda is very deeply rooted it is an excellent species for assisting the control of high water tables and dryland salinity and erosion control.

Seasonal conditions permitting, it is hoped to conduct a field day harvesting native grass seed which usually ripens a week before Christmas.

Seed will then be available from the members of the Southeast Growers of Native Grass Seeds. In the meantime, envirocells of Microlaena and Danthonia are available from Glendale Native Grasses and Seeds.

ACT WILDLIFE AND BOTANICAL ARTISTS' GROUP

A new group has formed in Canberra. Named the ACT Wildlife and Botanical Artists' Group it has grown quickly with over 40 members. They meet at Hughes Community Centre on the first Monday of each month (second Monday if the first is a holiday) at 7.30pm. Every third meeting is planned as a weekend field trip to some interesting location. Guest speakers and workshops are planned.

Membership is \$30 to cover admin. costs and newsletter. Enquiries:

Julia Landford	6281 5678
Helen Fitzgerald	6297 2697
Chris Marland	6241 2740

The Southeast Growers Association will have seed available in summer

For further information, phone John Betts (02 6226 1843, phone and fax) or Tony and Darryl Wilson (02 6227 6159, home).

Cost of kilo of seed:

Microlaena florets \$200
Danthonia \$150 (florets) \$300 (cleaned)
Themeda \$100 (florets) \$600 (cleaned)
Red Grass \$150 (cleaned)

MUGGA-MUGGA GRASSLANDS

Will Inveen is a new member of FOG and has recently been appointed Environmental Education Officer at the Mugga-Mugga Memorial Environmental Education Centre. Located on the property is about 4 Ha of "battered but not beaten" grassland. Will is currently looking at management options. Initially he is looking to protect the best grassland areas from grazing horses and perhaps undertake some rehabilitation work to get the grassland up on its feet once again. Future activities are likely to include weed removal, seed collection, education projects and field days. Will can be contacted for further information on 6239 5607 (w), 6242 4675.



Some quick sketches by Helen Fitzgerald who presented some of her works as part of our Workshop poster display - thanks Helen

WHAT ELSE IS ON?

ANU CONTINUING EDUCATION

COURSES Enrol by phoning 6249 2892, 6249 0776, or 6249 5991. Enrol with a friend and get a 10% discount.

Botanising in Canberra

Isobel Crawford 7-9pm on 3 Wednesdays from 9 Sept + 2 field trips 10am-12noon Sats 12 and 26 Sept Cost \$105

Learn to enjoy and recognise the diversity of plants in Canberra. In the field trips, visit the Australian Botanic Gardens.

Grass identification

Isobel Crawford 7-9pm on 3 Wednesdays from 4 Nov + 2 field trips 10am-12noon Sats 7 and 21 Nov Cost \$105

This course is for those who already have a basic knowledge of plant identification. Learn to recognise local grasses in the field, and to distinguish them from sedges and rushes, and in the laboratory learn to use microscopes and botanical keys.

WORKSHOP: RECOVERING THE MONARO 12-13 August 1998

Cooma and Snowy River Corridor

The workshop will:

- help find alternatives to current management for weed control
- explore work restoring landscape function to degraded grasslands
- plan practical trials of alternatives for agricultural systems
- provide information on the known alternatives

Conference contact: Charles Litchfield (Phone 02 6452 1455 or email, Coroo@snowy.net.au)

CONFERENCE ON THE MANAGEMENT OF GRASSY ECOSYSTEMS

9-10 July 1998 St Albans campus, Victoria University **Sponsored by** Dept of Natural Resources and Environment, Parks Victoria, and Grassy Ecosystem Reference Group **Cost** \$50 workers, \$30 non-workers and students **Conference contact:** Vanessa Craigie, 03 9412 4199, vanessa.craigie@nre.vic.gov.au

RECOMMENDED READING

A Field Guide to the Native Grasslands and Grassy Woodlands of South-Eastern Australia by Ian Lunt, James Ross and Tim Barlow (May 1998). Written by three leading grassland specialists, this new release is an excellent full-colour field guide to more than 200 grassland

species. As well as species descriptions, there is a comprehensive introduction to grassland ecology and management.

Published by the Victorian National Parks Association and the Trust for Nature, 10 Parliament Place, East Melbourne, Vic. 3002. Phone: 03 9650 8296.

FUTURE FOG ACTIVITIES

Saturday 10 October Radio Hill, Cooma - endangered Rutidosis and rare Discaria are managing to hang on. Possibly discussions with a local landcare group on developing a management plan.

Saturday 24 October (to be confirmed) Mac's Reef Road Visit Visit to a property on Mac's Reef Road to have a look around and offer some ideas on site evaluation, grassland plant ID, and possible management options.

Saturday 31 October Halloween Northern Cemeteries Tour FOG is making a spring visit to some of Rainer Rehwinkel's special cemeteries.

Saturday 14 November O'Connor Ridge Grassland Plant ID Visit to the O'Connor Ridge Parkcare Group to identify plants on its grassland site, evaluate and document the site, and suggest suitable management options.

November (date to be advised) Grassland Appreciation Day A visit to a couple of southern Canberra grassland sites to see them at the height of their spring flowering.

Saturday 5 and Sunday 6 December Southern Cemeteries Tour David Eddy of World Wide Fund for Nature will be FOG's guide to some well preserved areas of native grassland in Monaro cemeteries. A two-day activity if you have the time, (with an overnight stay at Geoff and Margaret's near Nimmitabel in a grassy woodland setting), but it will also stand as two one-day trips.

January 1999 Geoff Butler will show us some of his Crown Land sites which contain some interesting areas of secondary grassland.

For further details contact Margaret Ning

Plant and grassland ID courses by Isobel Crawford are highly recommended by those FOG members who have attended them.

On the last day of the Celtic year, the festival of Samhein (Halloween) was a time for storytelling and remembrance of the dead.

As October and November are peak flowering months for grasslands, FOG will try to make the most of that time.

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denuded areas. In the US about 45% of the 82 common grasses used for reseeding rangelands are native to that country. Up until very recently, Australia had no registered native cultivars available in the seed trade, despite having 750 native grasses to select from. These grasses have adapted to the harsh climate and infertile soils of this continent and are thus suited to the low input production systems preferred for sustainable production. To be useful for domestication, economical to harvest and easy to establish, the species would have to meet a range of criteria. Groves (1990) suggests that in addition to their use as animal feed, there is a growing market for

adapted grasses for a range of non-agricultural uses:

- * At roadsides, for stabilisation; in favour of introduced species which tend to invade adjacent native bush
- * In local government parks and recreation areas because they incur low maintenance costs
- * By soil conservation authorities, for

soil stabilisation

- * By river control authorities to stabilise creekbanks and dam foreshores
- * By mining companies, for large scale minesite rehabilitation
- * For gardens, amenities and landscaped areas.

Committee:

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FRIENDS OF GRASSLANDS INC

supporting native grassy ecosystems

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<http://www.geocities.com/Rainforest/Vines/7769/index.html>