

News of Friends of Grasslands

September 1998

COMING EVENTS

Margaret Ning

2pm, Saturday 29 August - Slide/chat Afternoon Environment Centre, Kingsley St, Acton

Some FOG members will give short slide presentations on different aspects of grasslands: grassland plant communities, grassland invertebrates, grassland reptiles, etc. We'll also look at examples of the tools being used in grassland evaluation and analysis, e.g. herbariums, species lists, etc. Coffee/tea and biscuits will be served.

7.30pm, Thursday 24 September - Workshop on Grassland Site Evaluation - Dierk's place, 121 Springvale Dr, Weetangera

FOG aims 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. The main speakers will be Rainer Rehwinkel who will describe his methods of grassland site evaluation, Isobel Crawford who will make suggestions on how FOG can organise site evaluation, and David Eddy who will come up with some practical suggestions on how we can proceed.

Saturday 10 October - Radio Hill, Cooma

Visit Radio Hill where some endangered Rutidosis and rare Discaria are managing to hang on. To carpool, meet at 8.15am at St Mark's carpark (Blackhall St, Barton) for an 8:30 am departure. Otherwise, meet us at Radio Hill at 10am. (Just before Cooma, left turn onto the Polo Flat Rd just after the wreckers, travel about 3 kms through the industrial area until you see the radio tower on the hill on the right - we'll be on the right hand side of the road.) BYO lunch or try a cafe in Cooma.

Saturday 24 October, 10.30am-noon Mac's Reef Road Visit

Visit a property on Mac's Reef Rd to have a look around and offer some ideas on site evaluation, grassland plant ID, and possible management options. The property is a prime example of yellow box woodland. Travel north along the Federal Hwy & turn right onto Mac's Reef Rd. Drive for 3 kms to RMB 733 which is on the right just after the former Rehwinkel Animal Park. Please co-operate with our hosts by parking along Mac's Reef Rd rather than in their driveway.

Inside this issue

- Natives in my lawn - Michael Bedingfield
- Budding artist, Ann Smith

Saturday 31 October - Halloween Northern Cemeteries Tour

All the rain we've had will ensure that our early spring visit to Rainer's special cemeteries will be very rewarding. Rainer will wait till closer to 31 Oct before making the final choice of cemeteries so please RSVP to me if you'll be joining us and I'll distribute a map and other details when things are finalised. We'll leave around 8am - carpooling available.

November (to be advised) Grassland Visits

Visit a couple of southern Canberra grassland sites to see them at the height of their spring flowering. Prospective sites are Mugga Mugga and Conder.

Saturday 14 November, 10am-1pm O'Connor Ridge Grassland Plant ID

We'll join the O'Connor Ridge Parkcare Group to identify plants on its grassland site, evaluate and document the site, and suggest suitable management options. This area is in the path of one of the John Dedman Parkway options. We'll meet at the northern end of Dryandra St (known as the Archibald St entrance) at 10am.

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.

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

For information about any activities (including times and venues), please phone Margaret Ning on 6252 7374 or 6241 4065 (home)

	<p>VISIT TO MULLIGAN'S FLAT <i>Report by Geoff Robertson</i></p> <p>On 25 July, 20 FOG members turned up to Mulligan's Flat to greet the dawn which was announced by a kookaburra's loud laugh. We did not, as promised, see the sun glistening on the frost-covered cobwebs - it was too overcast and warm for that. Maybe next year!</p>	<p>types and quality of sites and discuss the management of their problems.</p> <p>On Thursday morning the conference opened with a variety of overviews from Vanessa Craigie (GERG Vic/DNRE), Tim Barlow (VNPA) and then views of the roles, responsibilities, strategies and priorities of DNRE, Parks Victoria, Ballarat University and Merri Creek Management Committee. After lunch we got into the more interesting stuff about managing grasslands. A variety of speakers spoke about: what triggers weed invasions, maintenance of open structure (burning & mowing), fire and conservation management, managing for both flora and fauna, habitat requirements of various classes of vertebrates, responses to management by some invertebrates - followed by a "summing up" session.</p>
<p><i>Dierk cooked the porridge which went down well</i></p>	<p>Breakfast was a treat. Dierk cooked the porridge which went down well, even according to normally non-porridge eaters. Margaret treated us to bread, sausages and raisin toast, washed down with tea, coffee and juice.</p>	<p>A dozen or so poster displays were mounted in the cafeteria where the group had lunches, morning and afternoon teas. Most were publicity/information about grassland conservation projects, with a strong dominance of Victorian news. A few provided information on research/trial projects related to native grasslands and their management.</p>
	<p>Our FOG posters were on display, which helped to provide a perspective. After breakfast, there was a long ambling walk led by our guide David Eddy, who proved his point that grasslands can be interesting even in a mid-winter dawn. He pointed out the forbs and grasses that were present and it was interesting to be shown many forbs in their early stages. He also pointed out the different ecosystems at Mulligan's Flat - the grassland, the woody grassland, the woodland, and the wet bits - and talked about some of the indicator species. An extra bit of good news is that we saw few weeds.</p> <p>Many members contributed their knowledge, insights and anecdotes. Also it was an opportunity for members to exchange views on all manner of conservation issues. Thanks to all the organisers.</p>	<p>The Conference Dinner at University of Melbourne on Thursday night was excellent; an opportunity to meet people from far and wide (including Tasmania!). The entertainment was provided by comedian Rod Quantock who informed us of the depth and breadth of his grassland knowledge.</p> <p>On Friday we heard speakers on: weed control, weed species replacement, learning lessons from management of Victorian grassland reserves, grazing as a grassland management tool, soil fauna and disturbance, pest invertebrates and management trials on new grassland reserves. After afternoon tea we broke into small discussion groups to allow everyone to have an input on the questions of, what management techniques have worked, what examples of successful monitoring exist, and what do we need to do more of.</p>
<p><i>Conference - an opportunity to meet people from far and wide including Tasmania</i></p>	<p>RECOVERING THE MONARO <i>Report by Margaret Ning</i></p> <p>FOG members were amongst those who attended the Cooma and Snowy River Corridor workshop Recovering the Monaro (12-13 August). The purpose of the workshop was to 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, and provide information on the known alternatives. The workshop showed that there was much to be done if Serrated Tussock and African Lovegrass are to be beaten, but the encouraging news is that forces are marshalling against them. Congratulations to Charles Litchfield for putting the workshop together.</p>	<p>Some interstate attendees (including myself) were a little disappointed that, although the conference purported to consider and represent south-east Australia, there was a very strong bias toward Victorian sites, knowledge, problems and people. Almost no mention was made of the high quality, relatively stable and in some cases large grasslands of the NSW Tablelands and Riverina, Tasmania and South Australia. Several speakers seemed rather pessimistic about the long term prospects of grasslands, seemingly because their experience is limited to the small public remnant grasslands near Melbourne.</p>
	<p>DOWN TO GRASS ROOTS (Conference on the management of native grassland in south-east Australia) <i>Report by David Eddy</i></p> <p>On Wednesday July 8, the afternoon before the conference, a number of people visited several small grassland sites near Melbourne to see the</p>	<p>If anyone is interested in more detailed information, the pre-conference abstracts were available at the conference and may still be available from Vanessa Craigie (Vic. DNRE) - 03 9412 4199. A set of proceedings should also be available in due course.</p>

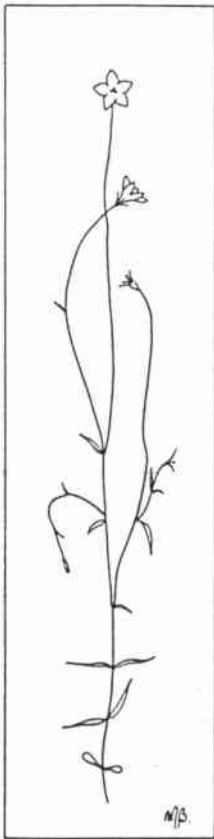
NATIVES IN MY LAWN

Michael Bedingfield

I live in the relatively new suburb of Conder which is in the Lanyon Valley. When I moved here six years ago there was a fair amount of relatively undisturbed native grassland which had survived the grazing and hadn't yet been developed. There is still some left on the fringes of the suburb and in the last few years I've been inspired to draw some of the plants.

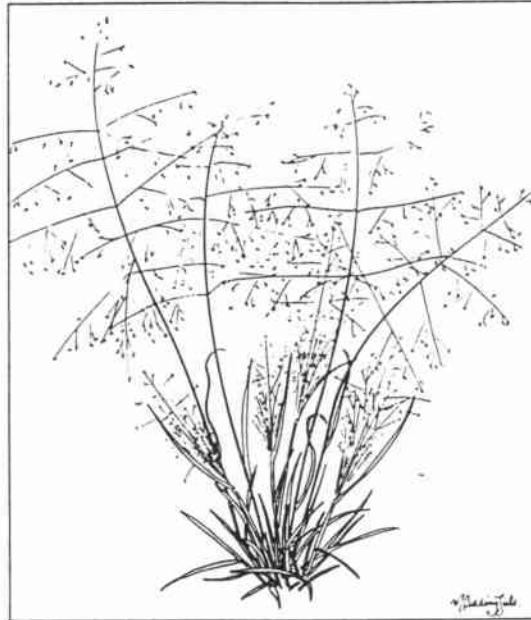
After a bit of education I started discovering some of these natives growing in my yard.

The most obvious was Windmill Grass (*Chloris truncata*) (drawing lower RHS). Also common was *Geranium retrorsum*, a native geranium with a tiny pink five-petalled flower. There was also the occasional *Panicum effusum* (pictured top RHS). Red Grass (*Bothriochloa macra*) wasn't there initially but is now quite established. This grass is common throughout Canberra.



Common Bluebell (*Wahlenbergia Communis*)
Michael Bedingfield 1997

A smaller member of the Native Bluebell family, *Wahlenbergia multicaulis* also survived my lawn mowing efforts. Its height is typically 6-8" and its flower is only half the diameter of the Common Bluebell (*Wahlenbergia communis*) (pictured above).

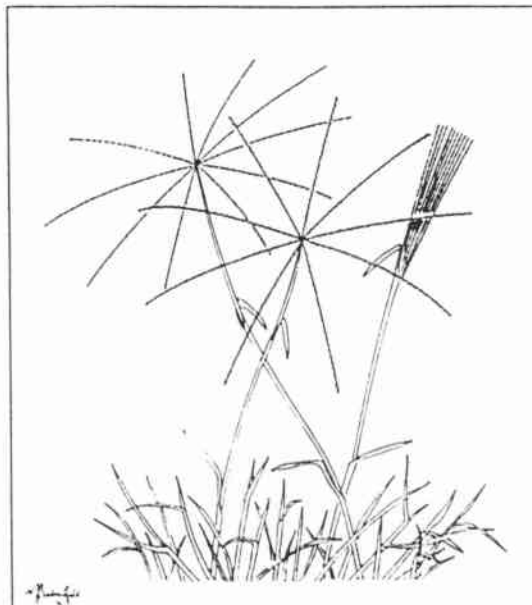


Panicum effusum Michael Bedingfield 1995

Another plant with a tiny pink four-petalled flower was found to be native - Willow Herb (*Epilobium billardierianum cinereum*). This is just as hardy as the *Wahlenbergias* and *Geranium retrorsum* and was growing quite well out here during our last summer, despite the hot dry conditions.

A plant which resembles the Clustered Daisies was also very resilient. It is Jersey Cudweed (*Pseudognaphalium luteo-album*). It looks similar to the *Chrysocephalum apiculatum*. The main difference is the flowers are creamy in colour instead of yellow.

All is not lost for these tough natives. My lawn is not as neat looking as my neighbour's, since I often mow around these plants. However, it is a lot more interesting.



Windmill Grass (*Chloris truncata*) M Bedingfield 1997

Some native grasslands still on the fringes of Conder

My lawn is not as neat as my neighbour's.... but it is a lot more interesting

GRASSLAND PLANTS OF SOUTH-EASTERN AUSTRALIA Neil and Jane Marriott, Bloomings Books, 1998. (183 pages, >170 photos)
Review by David Eddy

This book will become an essential part of the field equipment of many people, amateur and professional.

For some time, a gap has existed in the availability of a book concentrating on the flora of our temperate grassy ecosystems - more specifically a small, concise book suitable for field use and aimed at assisting field identification of herbs and shrubs. Neil and Jane have filled that gap. No longer do we have to take the 4 volumes of Flora of NSW into the field (in a wheelbarrow)! This book is very compact (110 x 210 mm) and will fit comfortably in the glovebox, daypack or even a large anorak pocket.

The more common herb and shrub (120) genera of SE Australia are represented by a selection of (170) species, one per page, with a colour photograph of each. The text is concise and consistent, each page carrying: a description of the plant, its leaves, flowers and fruits; its distribution in the four south-eastern States; notes on similar looking species; and a colour photograph. At the top of each page is a coloured band containing the species' botanic name, common name/s, family name and a common name for the family. The species are listed in alphabetic order according to botanic name. The front of the book includes an introduction to our grassy ecosystems and notes on their history, current status and a vision of their future. At the back is a glossary, a guide to pronunciation of botanic names, a list of references and further readings, and an index of common names.

M. Griffin-Warwicke is the Convenor of the Ginninderra Wetland Care Group 6241 6334

The authors explain the criteria for selection of species to represent each genus near the front of the book. It is not intended to depict all the species within each genus across the whole of temperate south-east Australia. This means that readers in a particular region, like the NSW Southern Tablelands, will find that some species described in the book do not occur locally, while others which do are not listed. The book has been printed on robust and weather resistant paper with a heavy plasticised card cover. The result is an excellent introductory field guide for anyone interested in becoming familiar with the herb and shrub plants of grassy ecosystems in this corner of the country.

BATTLING THE WILLOWS

(We were interested to know the latest news on the Ginninderra Wetland which FOG visited on 28 March. Maurice obligingly gave us the following update.)

M. Griffin-Warwicke

In March 1998, the Ginninderra Wetland Care Group began its massive clean-up of rubbish and woody weed removal on its wetland site on Ginninderra Creek near the Barton Highway bridge. Approximately 600 kgs of rubbish and 500 tons of woody weeds were removed. For those who know the area we have now completely removed exotic species such as Hawthorns, briars and Willows from within the creek, and Hawthorns and briars from along the banks of the creek. We have also identified some future frog habitats along the creek where they can breed without being attacked by mosquito fish.

Since the Willows have been removed from the wetland site there has been a significant change in the ecology of the area back to a more natural state.

The water quality has improved 100%, water flows have improved with only a few obstacles in its path and the quality and health of aquatic species have shown marked improvement.

During the process we re-discovered one of the original billabongs and believe that it may be spring fed. When we tested the water in this billabong prior to Willow removal the oxygen content was so low as to be classified as extremely poor. However, after the Willows were removed and the sun was able to penetrate the surface, the oxygen content on the following test went off the scale (113% - our test scale only went to 90%). We again examined aquatic species and found a marked improvement in their health.

Since Willow removal we have also noted several native plants re-establishing, 5 different frog calls, several families of ducks, one rather awkward pelican, several wading birds and kookaburras.

What most people do not realise about the Willows is that native birds rarely use them for nesting as they do not produce safe nesting habitats. In all the removal that we have done only four nests were found and three were blackbird nests (i.e. an introduced species). Only one possum was found up a tree - because it had been caught out too far from its normal habitat.

Being about 80% water content, Willows also use enormous amounts of water. They also change river courses, can cause stream bank erosion and reduce the chances of any native flora or fauna surviving where they exist.

continued on page 7

A BUDDING ARTIST - Ann Smith

Ann Smith is a member of the Botanical and Wildlife Illustrators Group which recently formed in Canberra. Her daughter and son-in-law own a small property at Wamboin which Ann loves to visit and soak up inspiration. This FOG newsletter is showing some of her drawings of Wamboin grasslands and plants. Unfortunately, due to size limitations we have reduced the scale of her drawings but you will still appreciate her skills.

Ann is a beginner who recently completed a course with Helen Fitzgerald. While maybe not everyone can draw, many can with a little encouragement. Dormant art skills vary. Ann seems to have a lot of talent that has suddenly been unlocked.

The drawings were done in June this year and so Ann was not able to capture many flowers. However, her drawings show that a grassland can be interesting even in winter. We hope you enjoy them.



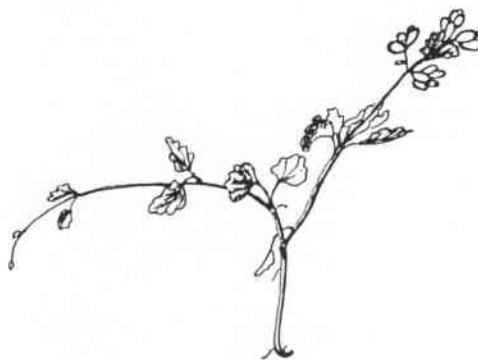
Many FOG members are keen to learn how to identify plants. This opens up a whole new world to us as we discover how plant structures and flowers differ, the life cycles of plants, how particular plants grow in particular ecosystems, etc. Acquiring knowledge can take many forms; art illustration being one. Often illustration can help us to see an aspect of a plant we would otherwise have missed. FOG welcomes plant illustrations to its newsletter.

In future newsletters we would like to take art illustration further and hope that articles may use Ann Smith's and Michael Bedingfield's (see page 5) skills to illustrate or highlight points of interest.

We know that many members of FOG have some art talents but we won't mention names just now. If you would like to venture a picture or several, please let us know.



A couple of Ann's favourite places - grasslands in Wamboin



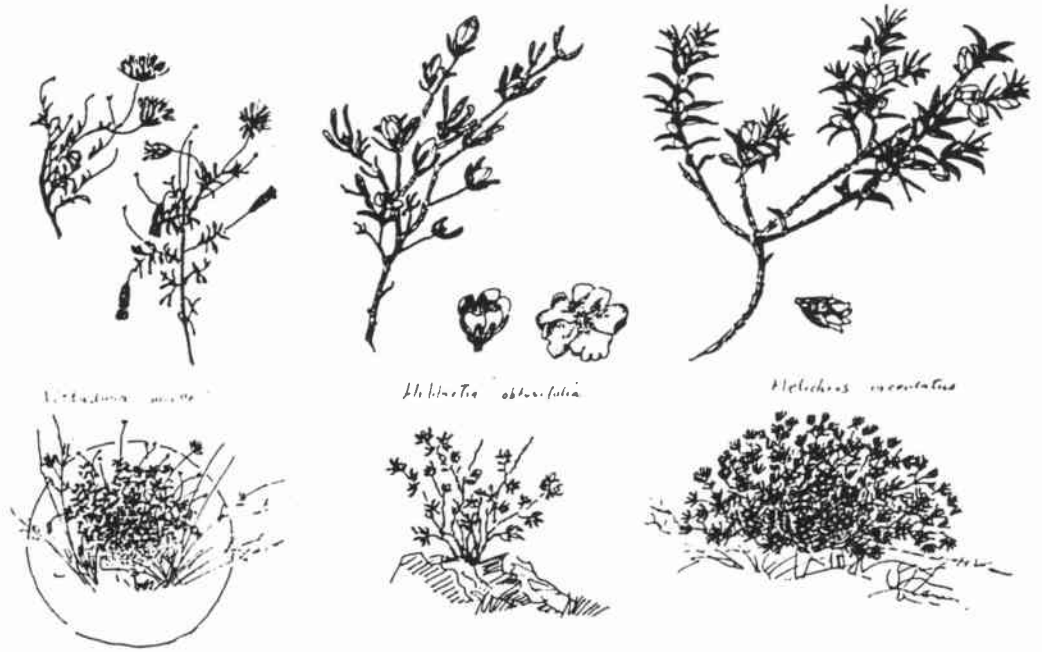
Ann does not know the names of all the plants she draws but is working on it



Ann Smith considers that to appreciate a plant fully it should be drawn at three levels: the complete plant, the individual branch and individual flower. The three top plants drawn are some of Ann's favourites. They are from left to right: *Vittadinia muelleri*, *Hibbertia obtusifolia* and *Melichrus urceolatus*.

Below left she shows three aspects of a fern: snuggled at the base of a rock, a branch and the individual leaf.

Bottom right shows some grasses and sedges which still capture our interest well after they have flowered.



Wombourne June 1998



MICROLAENA AND DANTHONIA PLANTING AND HARVESTING DEMONSTRATION

Our last newsletter included an article by John Betts of Yass on growing native perennial grasses and harvesting their seed. In his article, John mentioned his intention of conducting a harvesting field day around Christmas time when the (Microlaena and Danthonia) seed ripens. John and his group also intended to plant a hectare of Microlaena some time this month and had invited FOG members who were interested to watch the process. Unfortunately the wet weather has thwarted any August sowing and it will still be at least 2-3 weeks until this project can get under way. If any FOG members would like to watch this sowing please contact me and I shall keep them posted regarding developments. We shall probably have similar arrangements for the Christmas harvesting as the timing is difficult to predict.

(Also, apologies to John and his group for an error in our last newsletter when we swapped the captions on the photos of their harvesters. *-Margaret Ning*)

WHAT ELSE IS ON?

Saturday 29 August, ACT for Trees will hold a lecture with soup & crusty rolls from 5-8pm - for more information phone 6239 6400.

Black Mountain Wildflower Walks will commence again in September. For up to date information please contact the organisers on 6258 4724 or 6253 1290.

Saturday 12 September, 2pm - Black Mountain frost hollow to forest walk Conducted by Friends of Aranda Bushland for Arbor Week and designed to show the affect of altitude on vegetation. Visitors welcome - meet on William Hovell Drive between Bindubi St and Caswell Drive.

13 September - Cooleman Ridge walks
The Cooleman Ridge Parkcare Group is conducting two walks on the Ridge on Green Up Day, at 8.30am (hoping to see some birds) and 2.00pm. For those who missed the earlier FOG field trip to Cooleman Ridge, the walks will be an opportunity to find out about the activities of this parkcare group. These include planting grasses and trees, weed removal and a number of monitoring activities. (Ph. Bess Sledge, 6288 7536)

13 September to 11 October - Helen Fitzgerald's water colour exhibition at Cuppacumbalong - Helen's work features aspects of our natural heritage-flora, fauna and landscapes.

Sunday 11 October, 11am-3pm (to be confirmed) Weedbuster Week Field Day - on the banks of the Molonglo opposite Duntroon. Experts will be on hand to discuss various weed control methods and there will also be an opportunity to increase weed ID expertise.

Letter to Editor (*Thanks Phyl for your letter. Other contributions on this and other issues welcome, but please keep them short*)

Thank you for the Friends of Grasslands Newsletter and also for the brochure "Life and Death in the Grass". There was just one sentence in the latter that caused me great pain, even if it was only meant to be taken lightheartedly, and that was, "No trees please, this is a native grassland.!" I also support tree planting and Landcare projects and I cannot be comfortable with anybody declaring "no trees" when our need for more trees is so great. It is possible to have trees (native) and grassland (native) - see savannah woodland.

Phyl Spencer

COURSES

ANU Continuing Education - Two courses by Isabel Crawford - **Botanising in Canberra** (Sept) and **Grass identification** (Nov) still have vacancies. Phone 6249 2892, 6249 0776 or 6249 5991 if you wish to enrol. Full details were given in our last newsletter.

Greening Australia regeneration courses in November
Several regeneration courses are being offered: Bush Regeneration (Alison Elvin 2 days \$40/concession \$30); Riparian Restoration (Alison Elvin 1 day \$25/\$15); Wetland Restoration (Alison Elvin 1 day 25/\$15); and Seed collection and propagation (Brian Cumberland 1 day \$20). These courses are a FOG initiative so take advantage of them if you can. Contact Margaret Ning for extra details and application form.

BATTLE AGAINST WILLOWS (*from page 4*)
With our spring planting of local understorey native plants, shrubs and bushes and, of course, native grasses, we expected to attract significant bird and life back into the area. Already the area is frequented by more native animals.

This time next year we hope the place will be well worth a visit. If you wish to join in the Ginninderra Creek rehabilitation project, or find out more, we meet on the third Sunday of every month at 10.00am on site (on the creek near the Barton Highway Bridge). If you have any ideas on planting local native plant species let me know and we will check them against our list. Our first spring planting will be Sunday 20 September - weather permitting.

Plant ID courses given by Isabel Crawford; Botanising (Sept) and Grass ID (Nov) are highly recommended

Greening Australia's Bushland regeneration courses were a FOG initiative, so take advantage of them.

IN THE MAIL - Naarilla Hirsch

ANIC News (Australian National Insect Collection Newsletter CSIRO Entomology). While not specifically relating to grasslands, there are a number of interesting articles, e.g. on current research activities, semi aquatic bugs and bio prospecting (which refers to the process of searching the natural world for chemical structures in a systematic and scientific way, to find biologically active compounds that benefit human health or crop and animal production).

Three interesting brochures were included in the newsletter. First, BioLink, (the Biodiversity Information Management System), a system of integrated software packages designed for collecting, maintaining, analysing, applying and disseminating a wide range of taxon- and specimen-based information. Second, ANIC technical training course on 21-25 September. While this is designed for entomological technicians, participation by amateur collectors and students is also welcomed. Third, a brochure on the Zoological Catalogue of Australia, a computer database of taxonomic and biological knowledge of the Australian fauna which is also being produced in book

form. Further information about any of these or a copy of the newsletter can be obtained from the FOG secretary or from CSIRO Entomology.

Bogong FOG has received a copy of the most recent issue of Bogong. Articles in this issue include research in Antarctica, Earth Workers, effluent as an alternate water source and urban conservation.

ACT Flora and Fauna Committee Annual Report The ACT Flora and Fauna Committee has considered Action Plans (which outline conservation issues and proposed conservation measures for protecting threatened species and communities) for several grassland species such as *Delmar impar*, *Rutidosia leptorrhynchoides* and *Synemon plana* and for natural temperate grassland. Yellow box/red gum grassy woodland has been declared as an endangered community within the ACT. The Committee invites individuals and community groups have a concern for conserving our biodiversity to participate in the nominating process for threatened species. A copy of the annual report can be obtained from the FOG secretary.

Your committee:

Geoff Robertson	President	6244 5616 (w) 6241 4065 (h & fax)	geoff.robertson@dss.gov.au
Naarilla Hirsch	Vice President		naarilla.hirsch@health.gov.au
Paul Hodgkinson	Secretary	6278 3231 (w & h)	phodgkin@aucom.com.au
Art Langston	Treasurer	6258 1032	art.langston@dwe.csiro.au
Margaret Ning	Activities	6252 7374 (w)	margaret.ning@abs.gov.au
	Membership	6241 4065 (h & fax)	
Dierk von Behrens	Newsletter	6254 1763 (h)	vbehrens@actonline.com.au
Kim Pullen	Committee	6246 4263 (w)	kimp@ento.csiro.au
David Eddy	Committee	6242 8484 (w) 6242 0639 (fax)	deddy@ozemail.com.au
Linda Hodgkinson	Committee	6278 3231 (h)	u983405@student.canberra.edu.au

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

FRIENDS OF GRASSLANDS INC
PO Box 987
Civic Square ACT 2608

