

# News of Friends of Grasslands

Supporting native grassy ecosystems

March-April 2007

ISSN 1832-6315

## IMPORTANT MESSAGE

Please read article on FOG survey on page 8, and complete and return the enclosed questionnaires by 30 March. This is very important for FOG's future.

### Program

**SAT 10 MAR 9:30am to 4pm Visit to Scottsdale and Ingelara** This will be an exciting visit to look at recovery grassy ecosystems starting with very degraded pastures. Scottsdale is a 1300ha grassy ecosystem property which Bush Heritage plans to restore. At Ingelara African lovegrass is being replaced by native grasses. For catering and possibly car pooling purposes, contact Geoff Robertson (details back page). For an explanation of the trip see page 2.

**SAT 24 MAR 9:30 am to 3:30pm Working bee at Old Cooma Common.** Attending working bees provides an opportunity to visit one of the best grasslands in the Monaro, develop your skills, and to catch up with FOG members and experts. See details on page 2.

**SUN 29 APR 9am to 2pm Explore the Lower Cotter Catchment with Greening Australia.** Greening Australia Capital Region is hosting a bus tour for FOG members to see a variety of revegetation and conservation projects within the ACT, as part of the *ACT Land Keepers* project. The tour will focus on areas in the Lower Cotter Catchment and is a great opportunity to see restoration works already undertaken and hear about future rehabilitation plans. Lunch provided. Cost nil. To book, contact Janet Russell on 6251 8949 or fogcanberra@yahoo.com.au.

For remainder of the 2007 program, see page 2.

### Of special interest

**SAT-SUN 17 and 18 MARCH Open garden day** from 10 am at 10 Wickham Crescent, Red Hill. FOG members will be delighted to see Ben and Ros Walcott's garden, and may even have an hour or two to help Rosemary Blemings man the gate. The garden a general large-scale native garden with a large centrally positioned, native grassland. This is the second opening of their garden but may be the last for a while. Entry is gold coin donation. If you can help on the gate please contact Rosemary (roseble@tpg.com.au or phone 6258 4724).

*Yellow dot on your label,  
This is your last newsletter unless you renew*

For those of you who have not renewed their FOG membership, we are enclosing a further renewal notice. Please complete it and send it in, otherwise this will be your last newsletter. If you have received a renewal form and think you have already sent us a cheque (unless it has been in the last few days), please contact Margaret on 6241 4065.



Images from FOG's/ANPS's  
Southern Grasslands and Swamps Tour

## News Roundup

### More diary dates 2007

Please place the following dates in your diary. For more details, contact Geoff Robertson (details back page).

MAY – to be advised

SAT 16 JUN 2 to 4:30pm **FOG slide afternoon** title to be advised. Mugga Mugga Education Centre.

SAT 14 JUL 2 to 4pm **Understanding Canberra's grasslands**. FOG's winter afternoon visit to Mulangarri, ACT.

SAT 25 AUG 1:30 to 5pm **Workshop on FOG's future directions** Mugga Mugga Education Centre.

WEEKEND 28 to 30 SEPT **Eastern Riverina grassy ecosystems tour**

THURS-FRI 11 to 12 OCT **Post-Stipa Conference Field Trip**, Mudgee and Wellington NSW.

SAT 20 OCT 2 to 4pm. **Visit to Belconnen Naval Station**, Lawson ACT (to be confirmed)

WED 7 NOV 12:30 to 1:15pm **St Mark's Grassland**, ACT

SAT 10 NOV 9:30am to 3:30pm **Working bee at Old Cooma Common**.

WED 21 NOV 5 to 6pm **Tarengo leek orchid** Hall Cemetery, ACT

SAT 8 DEC 9am to 5pm **Nungar Plain**, north of Adaminaby NSW.

### In this issue

- Program
- Membership renewal for 2007
- News roundup
- Grassland commentary
- FOG survey of members and supporters
- President's report for 2006
- Southern grasslands and swamps

### Scottsdale and Ingelara

On 10 March FOG will visit Scottsdale, a 1300ha grassy ecosystem property north of Bredbo (NSW), which was purchased by Bush Heritage in early December 2006, as part of the Kosciuszko to Coast (K2C) project of which FOG is an active member.

This will be the first occasion for FOG members to visit Scottsdale which contains some exciting grassy ecosystem vegetation, and some real weed challenges. This will be an opportunity for FOG members to learn about and contribute to Bush Heritage's plans to restore the degraded pasture, dominated by African lovegrass (ALG) and serrated tussock (ST), to natural grasslands, and the plans for the recovery of other grassy ecosystems on the property.

The trip will include a visit to Ingelara (a property just north of Scottsdale) to hear about Pete Bottomley's and Gina Osborne's, and Tobias and Beatrice Koenig's work on replacing ALG and ST with native pasture.

The plan for the day is to meet on the Monaro Highway, just south of Johnson Drive, Tuggeranong, at 8:45am and visit Ingelara from 9:30am to 11am and Scottsdale from 11:30am to 4pm. At Ingelara Tobias et al will describe their strategies and methods which are based on holistic/biodynamic practices and will show people around.

At Scottsdale Owen Whitaker and Lauren Van Dyke will outline the K2C project and the Scottsdale component, and will show us an ALG site (before lunch), and the river and the woodland heights (after lunch).

Lunch will be a barbeque planned for 1pm. For morning tea, FOG will provide hot water, coffee, tea, milk, sugar, juice and biscuits, and for lunch sausages (or meat substitute), onions, bread, coffee, tea, etc. – definitely not a banquet. We plan to charge \$5 per head, payable on the day, to cover costs. For catering and possibly car pooling purposes, contact Geoff Robertson (details back page).

### Old Cooma Common

The next working bee at Old Cooma Common is on Sat 24 March (9:30 am to 3:30pm).

Old Cooma Common is a grassland reserve, located off the southern end of Polo Flat Road, Cooma, and has been established by FOG and Cooma Monaro Council. It is fascinating to visit any time and is one of the best grasslands in the Southern Tablelands. It contains two threatened and a rare plant species.

FOG holds working bees there in March and November each year and they may involve spraying St John's wort and African lovegrass, cutting and daubing briars, seed removal, mapping weeds, and applying monitoring procedures. Some tasks will not involve herbicides. Taking part regularly, or occasionally, in these working bees, is a good way to learn about grassland management.

At lunchtime we tend to buy lunch and retreat to a more shaded area. Enquiries and car pooling: Margaret Ning and David Eddy, see contact details back page.

## PLANTS OF THE ACT

A Guide to the Indigenous and Naturalised Vascular Plants of the ACT excluding Jervis Bay

## 2 CD-ROM SET

- Over 4000 full-colour photographs of 1300 species of the 1350 species found in the ACT
- Information on how to identify each plant species, and how to tell it apart from similar species
- Information by field botanist with 20 years experience
- Requires 1.2GB hard drive space to download to your computer

Full Licence \$150 (student and quantity discounts available – ask us). Send payment made out to 'Wildwood Flora', Wildwood, 367 Koppin Yarratt Road, Upper Lansdowne NSW 2430



## Propagating grasses and forbs

### Grasscover

27 JANUARY FOG held its second native grasses and forbs propagation workshop conducted by Warren Saunders. Fifteen people attended. While the workshop followed much the same pattern as that conducted in January 2006, Warren provided many new insights as, in that twelve months, he has continued to make innovations in plant establishment techniques focussing on how to beat the drought.

The workshop started in the carpark, corner of McCoy and Liversidge Streets, Acton (the Australian National University (ANU)) where Warren provided some history on his personal involvement in propagating native grasses and seeds and the development of his business Seeds and Plants Australia, and its techniques in changing some of the public landscapes around Canberra by introducing indigenous grasses and forbs.

Warren displayed his various tools of trade for drilling holes to get tube stock well established, along with water crystal and his magic fertiliser mix. His establishment methods were proving effective against the drought. He also showed his innovative plant protectors which both protect plants from grazing and provide ideal hot house conditions for water retention and warmth. Throughout the workshop, participants listened closely to Warren's every word and bombarded him with questions.

After the tool demonstration, we moved to the adjacent grassland garden which Warren had helped to establish at the ANU some years ago. That garden was developed around the trees that were already present. The huge old apple box (*Eucalyptus bridgesiana*) which dominates the site is alone sufficient to make a visit to the garden worthwhile.

The garden has many species of well established grassland plants and provides an excellent example of a grassland garden. While it contains weeds here and there, the garden is not actively managed for weeds, demonstrating that competition from indigenous plants, once established, is probably the best defence against weeds.



At the garden site, Warren talked about the flowering and seeding patterns of different grasses and forbs, and when and how to collect seed. The participants then whipped out their bags and collected seeds for later use in their gardens or on their properties.

Next we adjourned to Seeds and Plants at Pialligo where morning tea, including Danish pastries, was provided. Warren then talked on, and illustrated, how he raises seeds to produce healthy material for later plantings. Again listening was intent and questions plentiful.

Photos: Warren talking about his tools of trade (on the ground) in the carpark, and Warren talking on seed collection in the adjacent grassland garden.

Warren invited people to take some soil mix, and provided seeds from a number of local grasses and forbs. My mate Jim, who took some weeping grass and barb-wire grass seeds home, said that these plants were becoming well established in his garden.

In the wrap up, Geoff Robertson, said that Warren was a long-term and generous member of FOG. Referring to



Warren's Koori background, Geoff said that Warren provided a modern example of how Koori (more strictly Murri as Warren is a Queenslander) knowledge and passion for the land can show us white fellas about caring for country. Warren replied that his enthusiasm for FOG had grown from the great amount he had learnt from FOG. He also said that Seeds and Plants always welcomed FOG members to drop by and talk over plant establishment. He always had some indigenous plants that people might like to grow in their gardens.

Warren encouraged people to help themselves to grass and forb plants. Mine are now nicely growing in my garden using water from my shower bucket.

A big thanks also to Paul Hodgkinson, who is a vice president of FOG and works with Warren. He also answered many questions about growing from native grass and forb seeds.

#### **Upcoming events and news**

*Kim Pullen, President*

The FOG Committee recently decided to establish an electronic newsletter.

Between issues of this newsletter, which comes out every two months, we have found it increasingly necessary to send out e-mail reminders about upcoming events, collation nights, and so on. FOG has also been increasingly asked by other groups to circulate information which cannot be easily included in the newsletter.

The Committee decided to formalise this by introducing an electronic newsletter which will be sent to FOG members with an e-mail address and to others who assist FOG to advertise its events. It is being issued as required. We hope members find this acceptable. The *FOG Upcoming Events and News* does not include graphics, so no messages are too large.

If you want to receive this electronic newsletter, and don't already, please contact Margaret Ning, and/or if you have material you want included please send it to Geoff Robertson. For contact details see back page.

#### **Wal Whalley AM**

*Geoff Robertson*

Well known botanist and grass expert, and dare I say FOG guru, Dr Ralph "Wal" Whalley (seen in photo with Yvonne Inge and Reto Zollinger at the last Stipa Conference) has been appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for his services to conservation and the environment, particularly for research into Australian native grasses and the promotion of their use for pasture, lawn, and revegetation of degraded natural landscapes (*The Land* 1 Feb, P15).

A more comprehensive write up of Wal's achievements is to be found in an article by Matthew Cawood (*the Land*, P49, 8 Feb). From being regarded as "mad" for studying native grasses, Wal is regarded as the father of native grasses, who has young and radical ideas but always based on good research. Congratulations Wal.

#### **From the editor**

Alas, one of our long-term contributors, Michael Bedingfield, has decided to not provide his regular plant profiles, while he concentrates on other things. We will certainly miss his contribution, which many readers speak favourably of.

However, starting next issue we will shall begin a series on plant groups and a series on insects. This could not be included in this issue as we needed to include the material about the FOG survey which I hope you will complete asap.

Also, as a reminder, *News of Friends of Grasslands* is also available in colour as a pdf file. If you would like to receive it in that form rather than through the post, please contact Margaret Ning (contact details back page).



#### **Fifth Stipa Conference**

Stipa Native Grasses Association Inc., whose vision is promoting and proving the profitable management of native grasses by motivating people in healthy landscapes, is holding its Fifth National Native Grasses Conference with the theme *Native Grasses for a Thirsty Landscape* from 7-10 October in Mudgee, NSW. The conference provides a platform for leading native grass managers, growers, scientists and community groups to share insights into the economic, social and ecological benefits of native grasses. As well as the scientific community presenting talks, there will be the highest proportion of landholder speakers than at any other Stipa conference.

The general themes for the conference will be doing business with native grasses, humanity's interaction with native grasslands, and enhancing natural resources with native grass management. Expressions of interests for spoken or poster presentations are being invited for submission and are due by 1 April 2007 and should be no more than 300 words. For more information contact Christine McRae (cmcrae@hwy.com.au) or (02) 6373 7628.

Following on from the conference FOG will be organizing a two day grassy ecosystem tour around Mudgee and Wellington (11-12 Oct), so please put this in your calendar. More details will be given in later newsletters.

## BOB runs on the board

**GUNGAHLIN ACT** As mentioned in the last newsletter, FOG has been asked to participate in a survey of Chilean needlegrass in the Gungahlin area as part of the *Bush on the Boundary Project (BOB)*.

Part of the BOB project is the promotion of three pamphlets on the Dunlop Grassland Nature Reserve, the Mulligans Flat and Goorooyaroo Nature Reserves, and the Ginninderra Catchment Group (two are featured here). Each is an excellent pamphlet, and in the case of the reserves, the pamphlets contain good maps. They are a useful inclusion in your FOG library, and FOG members may acquire copies by contacting the Ginninderra Catchment Group on 6278 3309 or via email.

Fifteen thousand Mulligans Flat brochures have been sponsored by Delphin Lendlease which is distributing 10,000, mostly to residents of Gungahlin. Five thousand of each of the other brochures has been printed and the Catchment Group is currently gearing up to distribute all three brochures as a public education initiative.

## Special grassland issue

Geoff Robertson

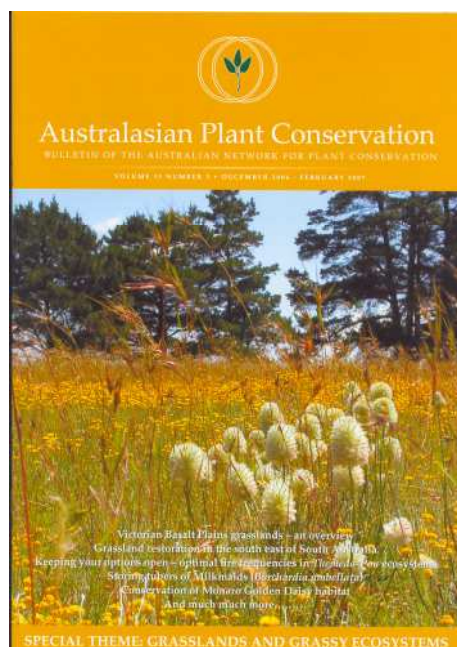
It seems to me that I am always singing the praises of *Australasian Plant Conservation*. This time I have gone one step further and have purchased a limited number of copies which we are selling to FOG members and supporters.

The issue is devoted to grasslands and grassy ecosystems. The articles include a wrap-up of the from-the-ground-up workshop (itself devoted to grassy ecosystems), Victorian basalt plains grasslands, the Victorian volcanic plains tender project, use of fire in themeda-poa systems, grassland restoration in south east SA, the Victorian Northern Plains CMN, conservation of natural temperate grasslands in the Southern Tablelands, conservation of Monaro golden daisy habitat, response of the endangered grassland



plant *Acanthocladium dockeri* to fire, local adaption and outbreeding depression: are we being overly conservative?, viability of Victorian western plains grasses, FOG supporting grassy ecosystems, and volunteering in grassy ecosystem conservation. Wow!

Members can obtain a copy of this 38 page issue from me for \$8, plus \$2 for postage. Contact details back page. Cover page is a photo of Victoria's basalt grassland by Paul Gibson Roy.



## Grow humus to fight drought

11 JANUARY Matthew Cawood (*The Land* page 8) reports on Glenn Morris' research into humus for his master's degree. Humus is organic matter that has been broken down into a stable form. It is seen in its purest form in an old compost heap, or under a rotted down pile of hay, but is present to some degree in all but dead soils. Hu-

mus is mostly derived from dead plant material, but also from animal carcasses and faeces – particularly those of the billions of microbes that live in each handful of fertile soil.

Glenn has found that one part of humus can hold four parts of water. A hectare of land where the first 30cm of soil contains 0.5 percent humus can hold 80,000 litres of water. Bump that to three percent and the same area can hold 480,000 litres.

While rain is the key to humus formation, keeping that water afterwards is down to farm management, Glenn claims.

## FOG submissions

Recently FOG has made three submissions and supported another. Before Christmas FOG wrote to the ACT Government and raised a number of matters, including: Caravan Park development at Symonston; the Molonglo Valley (supporting the Conservation Council position and also pressing the case of the pink-tailed worm lizard threatened by the proposal); seeking an update on Lawson; seeking information on management of grassland remnants on ACT public land outside reserves; progress on implementation of Action Plans No. 27 (woodlands), 28 (grasslands) and 29 (riparian); and certain aspects of management of Canberra Nature Park and reserves, especially weed management, visitor unfriendliness, and the need for public education to cover areas such as Conder. A meeting to discuss these matters is being arranged.

In a letter to the NSW Minister for Conservation, FOG expressed concern over damage done by vehicles and pigs at Nunnock Swamp.

FOG also made a short submission supporting ACT Government plans to build a feral proof fence at Mulligans Flat. This is an exciting proposal, although FOG has some concerns over public access. Copies of these three submissions are available from fogcanberra@yahoo.com.au. FOG has supported the Conservations Council's letter to the Minister of Territories and Administration opposing certain aspects of the planned development at Molonglo.



## High country land for sale

Margaret Ning

FOG has recently been informed that a beautiful 300 acre block of land approximately 35 kms south east of Tumbarumba, has been put on the market. The block is 'totally unimproved' alpine ash and mountain gum wet sclerophyll forest (see photo), and is only a stone's throw from Kosciuszko National Park. In fact, only around 800m separates it from the park and that 800m is managed as a conservation area, so the block forms a continuum of natural bush extending out about 2km from the park.

The asking price is \$125,000, but it is suggested that this may be negotiable. The block is totally fenced (all new boundary fences) with the exception of the turnoff from Bradleys Drive which can have a gate, and needs about 100m of fence to complete all fencing.

A spring and semi-permanent creek bisect the block. The latter is lined by dense woolly teatree, and lyre birds, broad-toothed rats, yellow-bellied, sugar and squirrel gliders, quolls, and olive whistler are amongst the various rare and endangered native animals found in the area. There are a lot of orchids on the adjacent block, so it wouldn't be drawing too long a bow to suggest that they would be on the block that is for sale as well.

More broadly, its location is off Elliot Way, on the road from Tumbarumba to Kiandra and Mt Selwyn and Cabramurra - the highest town in NSW. It is about three and a half hours travel time from Canberra, via the Hume Highway. Bradleys Drive is formed road access onto the block. There is no mains power readily available, and there are no improvements or dams on the block.

I have visited the block, so if you have any queries about it please give me a call. Unfortunately I only took a couple of photos as it was raining, but the real estate website also has a couple of photos.

Our thoughts are that a member or supporter (or a group of FOG members) may be interested in its purchase.



They are still receiving rain in that area, though not in large quantities.

Details are: Agent - [www.tumbarumbarealestate.com](http://www.tumbarumbarealestate.com). Address - Lot 6 Bradleys Drive, McPhersons Plain, NSW, 2653. Property No: prdtumba-424697, Size - 309.36 acres, 125.2 hectares.

## Two ANPC events

Through the *FOG Upcoming Events and News* (electronic newsletter), the Australian Network for Plant Conservation has been advertising a workshop, *Rehabilitation and Management of Disturbed Native Vegetation* (14 - 15 March 2007, Coffs Harbour, registration closes 2 March) and a national forum - *What lies beneath? The role of soil biota in the health and rehabilitation of native vegetation* (17 - 19 April 2007, Canberra, registration closes 5 April). Flyers are available on website <http://www.anpc.asn.au/conferences.html>.

## Envirofund Round 9

5 FEBRUARY Envirofund Round 9 has opened. The closing date is 27 April. According to Pam Vipond (Community Support Officer, Murrumbidgee CMA) some changes to this round include: the fencing rate has been increased from \$2,500/km to \$4,000, the standard rate of \$20/hr for volunteer labour has been increased to \$30/hr, a reduced matching contribution will be considered for applicants in EC declared areas, and applicants in EC areas are able to apply for weed and feral animal control as their pri-

mary activity. For an application form and detailed guidelines see [www.nht.gov.au/envirofund](http://www.nht.gov.au/envirofund) or call 1800 303 863.

## Philosophical challenges Groundcover

Does inadequate language get in our way of pursuing biodiversity and regeneration in Australian agriculture and create unnecessary division? This is the question posed in the December 2006 *Stipa newsletter* in a long article on exploring language. This is a humorous and thought provoking piece on how we might use language as a tool to progress our issues.

In a similar vein Sue Rahilly poses some philosophical questions based on her intellectual odyssey in an article titled *ploughed paddocks to native grasses at Terrick Terrick*. Elsewhere she reports on the FOG Victorian tour, while another article comments on Nicky Bruce's rethinking of the most appropriate approach to managing Terrick Terrick. Another fascinating piece is a book review by Wal Whalley on *Grasslands of the World* by Suttie, Reynolds and Batello.

## Snakes alive and well Grasscover

15-21 JANUARY The ACT Herpetological Association (ACTHA), in which some FOG members play an active role, reported an attendance of 4,275 for the week at its annual display at the Australian National Botanic Garden (ANBG). "Perhaps that's 4,275 more people with a greater ap-

preciation of our herpetofauna, perhaps it's one less shovel and one more camera that will be used in the next brown snake encounter, or just a heightened awareness of the importance of environment flows in our river systems" states ACTHA secretary Joe McAuliffe (photo below showing Joe catching a brown snake as part of his ANBG duties).

The display was not only a treasure trove of beautiful animals, including local threatened species, corroboree frog, striped legless lizard and grass-



land earless dragon, but it also sponsors many talks. The most important message for me is that in an era of climate change we need to let our biodiversity evolve and therefore our ecological corridors need to ensure that species can migrate to adapt to changing weather.

### **Time on your hands**

*Editor*

If you have a couple of hours, or even just half an hour, have a look at <http://www.iucn.org/themes/wcpa/pubs/taskforce.htm> which contains the *Proceedings from the Seminar on the Protection and Conservation of Grasslands in East Asia in Mongolia - 14 August, 2000*.

The seminar focuses on Mongolia's grasslands but also includes much information on the worldwide status and conditions of natural temperate grasslands. Not only does this make fascinating reading but it helps put our Australian grasslands into a worldwide context. Many of the obstacles that confront protection, management and recovery of our grasslands confront grasslands in Mongolia and everywhere else.

### **SEMINAR ON THE PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF GRASSLANDS IN EAST ASIA**



AUGUST 14, 2000  
ULAAABAATAR, MONGOLIA

PROCEEDINGS



## *Grassland commentary*

### *A grass loveless Christmas*

*Benj Whitworth*

I must say from the perspectives of grassland conservation I had a very disappointing Christmas and new year. I honestly believe there is an even more important role for FOG in the future.

Attitudes are changing away from biodiversity, particularly species conservation (see box). I have heard from numerous people over the past three or more months 'why bother' or 'who cares' about striped legless lizards and golden sun moths. People are starting to not care and this is due to a lack of interest shown by the media, poor arguments by conservationists, and complacency by scientists. There is an assumption that most things have been done, but conservation is about changing 'peoples' attitudes.

Cultural memory changes over time, it doesn't remain static (see box), therefore it is important to maintain the biodiversity conservation message, to stop getting attitudes like 'who cares' because before we know it, it will be gone. When I have argued the case, which I have done on almost all occasions I have heard that attitude, the people have realised the 'error of their ways' heh! heh! So it is not because they really don't care, they just haven't really thought enough about it.

What are the solutions?

The Grassland conservation message needs to be maintained in the public consciousness and this means in the media as well.

### **Environmental Memes**

(A meme is a cultural memory transferred like a gene)

Attitudes change over time. Often there is a long lag effect. For example, in the late '80s, it was about endangered species, early '90s it was forests, early '00s it was salinity and landcare. Now we are moving into water and greenhouse. Science is roughly five years or more before community attitudes change and then policy changes.

The positives and importance of grasslands need to be identified, written down, and explained on TV and on the radio and through other mechanisms whenever possible. Going back to simple conservation 'principles' and learning these will help when explaining to media, public and antagonistic people. Grasslands need to be made s\*xy again.

This can be done, e.g. through clever T-shirts like 'I'm a grass lover', 'save me some grass man', through media, taking film crews out during flowering season or for insects, and colourful brochures. With new technology anyone can now photograph and produce fancy looking brochures and posters.

### *Life on earth*

*David Eddy*

I hope that at least some of you managed to see the first in David Attenborough's new series of Life on Earth. It was promoted as being about our planet's 'great plains' and turned out to be a global portrait of grasslands (from the Arctic tundra to the Tibetan plateau to central Africa)! There were of course some stunning images and some very interesting statistics about grasslands and what they support.

From memory there were no images or references to Australian grasslands, but it certainly made me want to travel to Tibet and North America. I wonder what, if anything, we could do with such a program to promote grasslands here.



## ***FOG survey of members and supporters***

*Kim Pullen, on behalf of the FOG Committee*

*FOG is conducting a survey of members and supporters to evaluate FOG's effectiveness and to determine its future direction as part of its planned workshop (25 August).*

*Please complete the survey questionnaire which is enclosed in this newsletter as soon as possible (deadline 30 March 2007) and return it to FOG, PO Box 987, Civic Square, ACT 2608.*

*The questionnaire (distributed with this newsletter) essentially contains tick box answers and is easy to complete. Information you supply will be treated as confidential. You are welcome to provide comments on any aspect of the questionnaire (see questionnaire, section VIII).*

*Two copies of the questionnaire are enclosed as many memberships involve at least two people and we want everyone member to complete it. We would also like to encourage non-members to participate as their perceptions of FOG are very important to us so you are welcome to pass copies to non-members if the opportunity arises.*

*For additional survey questionnaires, or any enquiries, please contact fogcanberra@yahoo.com.au or Janet on 6251 8949.*

### **Introduction**

After twelve years (FOG was launched on 12 November 1994), it is time to review FOG's performance and determine its future direction. The committee has concluded that continuing on the current path may not be sustainable, as a heavy workload falls on a relatively few people. Accordingly, it is planning a workshop on 25 August 2007 in Canberra to discuss FOG's future direction and who might take responsibility for the various tasks. Members are urged to put this date in their diary now.

In recent years, questions have arisen about FOG's future direction. Has FOG achieved/not achieved its objectives, and/or should the objectives be modified? Should FOG be wound up, continue on its current path, or take a different path? What might a modified FOG look like and who might lead it? If FOG cannot sustain its current services, what minimum services should it provide?

### **FOG's values and objectives**

FOG objectives are set out in its constitution which covers definitions, values, principles, functions and objectives. These have generally stood the test of time, but members' views are sought on this. FOG's objectives are available on request from [fogcanberra@yahoo.com.au](mailto:fogcanberra@yahoo.com.au).

### **FOG members**

FOG had over 200 memberships at the end of 2006. As many of these are family memberships and some are corporate, the actual membership is somewhat larger. Members include professional managers, scientists and government or non-government employees concerned with natural resource management, ecology, vegetation and/or wildlife, including extension services. Members also include land owners and/or managers of land with conservation values, members of landcare, parkcare, and/or other community groups concerned with grassy ecosystem management, and students. The survey will provide more information on FOG's members.

The survey also seeks information on where members live and the average hours (per week) they might spend on unpaid work on conservation of grassy ecosystems.

### **Program**

FOG's program provides a range of diverse activities (at locations across south-eastern Australia) and has a learning rather than entertainment focus. FOG believes that even if only a few members attend an activity and gain from it, it is worthwhile. While some activities have attracted small numbers, most are well attended, and some extraordinarily so. The survey attempts to gain information on whether the activities suit members or not, and answers will be very helpful in designing FOG's future programs.

FOG's field activities cover a huge range and diversity of public and private sites. They aim to provide an appreciation of the structure, ecological function, diversity, management and recovery of grassy ecosystem sites. Sites owned or managed by members, or which are iconic, receive preference. On more extended trips presentations on various aspects of FOG activities may be included, and they provide the opportunity to socialise and network.

In earlier years FOG ran many major workshops, the last of which was the combined Stipa-FOG workshop held in November 2003. Since then, FOG has focused on shorter and/or specialised workshops. In the last several years these have included workshops on fungi in grassy ecosystems, insects in grassy ecosystems, basic grassy ecosystem ecology and plant identification, marine grasslands, and propagating native grasses and forbs.

Many of FOG's activities provide information to land managers on conservation management issues, as well as weed and feral animal management. Some activities have involved getting down and dirty. Old Cooma Common is a grassland reserve created by FOG and the Cooma-Monaro Shire Council, and FOG's regular working bees over many years have greatly assisted in developing members' on-ground skills and FOG's reputation. Also there have been several forays at Conder woodlands to repair damage done



by fire management and would-be BMX bikers. Plant and fauna surveys have also received a strong focus, with data collected being used in many ways, and FOG plant and fauna skills have greatly developed.

The FOG AGM has been a popular event, as have slide afternoons with either specially invited guests (quasi workshops) or members sharing their skills and insights. Power-point presentations that have been developed have been used in both adult and school education activities. Feedback is sought on these activities as well as FOG committee meetings and newsletter despatch nights.

### **News of Friends of Grasslands**

FOG's newsletter, published six times a year, has become a major vehicle to educate both members and non-members. It is now available in colour to those who receive it by e-mail. To promote FOG, many complimentary newsletters are given away each year. The FOG newsletter provides information on FOG's planned activities and reports on FOG and others' activities and many other matters relating to the conservation and recovery of grassy ecosystems, occasionally straying to somewhat broader topics. The March-April 2007 newsletter is FOG's sixty-sixth newsletter. FOG has recently introduced an electronic newsletter *FOG Program and News Update* to reach members and supporters between newsletter issues. The survey will provide feedback on these newsletters.

### **FOG submissions**

Over the years FOG has made numerous submissions and its views are often sought by government and other agencies. While many members may not read individual submissions, it is hoped that they will be able to provide some

feedback on them from what they have gleaned from newsletters.

### **Services to members**

FOG services to members include both direct and indirect services. Directly, FOG attempts to assist members in whatever way it can, including assisting them with sites they own, manage or are involved with, answering their queries and making their experience with FOG a pleasant one. Indirectly, FOG also does much behind-the-scenes work through networking; supporting other groups to organise workshops, other activities and prepare submissions; and providing slide presentations to schools and other community groups. Its education group is being developed to explore this further. The survey seeks feedback on how well it does/does not do this.

### **Future direction**

Most of the questionnaire aims to evaluate FOG's performance. This will provide important background in deciding whether FOG should continue or not, and if so in what form. Section VIII encourages members to elaborate on their answers and to provide answers to some of the broader issues facing FOG.

### **Planning the workshop**

The committee is creating a sub-group to plan for the workshop. If anyone wants to be involved, he/she is welcome.

## *President's Report for 2006*

*Kim Pullen*

*24 FEBRUARY This report was presented at FOG's AGM. Otherwise a report of that meeting and details of the new committee will appear in the next newsletter.*



The year 2006 was another positive one for Friends of Grasslands, and we move into 2007 with an increased membership and healthy finances. Following its stated aims, FOG continued working for the conservation of native grasslands and grassy ecosystems through advocacy, public education, flora and fauna surveys and the location, protection and restoration of

grassland remnants. FOG's bi-monthly newsletter enjoys wide circulation in grassland conservation and management circles.

The worsening drought has impacted on native grasslands, as on other ecosystems, and resulted in the cancellation of two FOG field excursions in November.

### **Membership**

Membership at the end of 2006 stood at 206. FOG is Canberra-based, and a majority, approximately 57 per cent of members live in the ACT. Another 35 percent live in NSW, mostly in areas close to the ACT, with the remainder in other states of Australia. As many memberships are family memberships and several of the memberships are corporate, and many newsletters are provided on a complimentary basis the total readership of the FOG newsletter will be considerably wider than a simple tally of memberships suggests.

Victorian members are investigating the practicality of forming a Victorian chapter of FOG. This idea gained impetus after a successful five day tour of Victorian grasslands by interstate members in October.

## Newsletter

FOG again owes thanks to Geoff Robertson and Margaret Ning as the impetus behind the compilation and production of our bi-monthly newsletter, *News of Friends of Grasslands*. Six issues appeared during the year, with the now established mix of news items, announcements, reviews, feature columns and feature articles. A mid-year conversion of the newsletter to PDF format saw a substantial improvement in image quality, and allowed on-line members to get their newsletter by e-mail - with coloured pictures! Thanks again to Geoff for this change. And thank you to all contributors to the newsletter during 2006—keep up the good work.

## Activities

FOG's busy program of activities during 2006 included field excursions, biodiversity surveys, site rehabilitation and infrastructure repair, illustrated lectures and slide presentations, and running of workshops.

We visited (in chronological order) Scabby Range Nature Reserve, Little Forest Plateau and Conjola National Park, Blundell's Flat, coastal heathlands near Eden, a member's native garden, the Goulburn district, north-central and western Victoria, Murrumbateman cemetery; 'Conder 4a' in Tuggeranong, St Mark's in Barton, and Monaro grasslands and swamps. These trips don't just happen, they require organisation and leadership. We thank Margaret Ning and Roger Farrow for organising the year's activities program, and the following people for leading field excursions: Darren Bain, Greg Baines, Mark Butz, Max Campbell, David Eddy, Roger Farrow, Geoff Hope, Yvonne Ingeme, Deanna Marshall, Jackie Miles, Rainer Rehwinkel, Mark Tschärke, Karen Wales and Benj Whitworth.

Presentations were given by Greg Baines, David Eddy, Roger Farrow, Geoff Hope, John Nightingale and Geoff Robertson. They entertained us all, taking us not only to the local grasslands we know and love, but also to such far-flung places as Alice Springs Desert Park and the mountains and deserts of Iran.

Two workshops were held in 2006. In January, Warren Saunders showed us how to propagate native grasses and forbs. In November, Roger Farrow, Geoff Robertson and I gave presentations at FOG's second *Discovering Insects* workshop.

Again, I thank everyone who contributed to our activities. If I have left anyone out, I apologise and thank you too.

## Old Cooma Common

Excellent news was received in September concerning Old Cooma Common grassland reserve, covering Radio Hill on the outskirts of Cooma — after FOG representations, expertly managed by David Eddy, Cooma Council agreed to formally establish a management committee for the reserve. In March and November FOG hit squads descended on the reserve to do battle with weeds and check fences and gates, and in December soil scientist David Tongway carried out a 'landscape function analysis' for input into future management.

## Formal submissions

FOG lodged submissions on the ACT draft aquatic species and riparian zone conservation strategy (Action Plan 29), ACT biosphere reserve, Kuma Nature Reserve draft plan of management, the development of the Canberra suburb of Crace, and the Lower Cotter management plan. It also wrote to the ACT government on a number of issues concerning grassy ecosystems.

## Committee

I thank the outgoing 2006 committee for their fine work and dedication. Vice presidents Paul Hodgkinson and Geoff Robertson supported me ably, secretary Janet Russell cleared correspondence and kept us all in touch, organised this and that and jogged my fading memory, treasurer Sandra Hand, as well as making the trek from Majors Creek for meetings, kept our finances in order, committee members David Eddy, Roger Farrow, Christine Kendrick, Yolanda Melgarejo, Margaret Ning, Dierk von Behrens and Benj Whitworth made vital contributions, and in some cases also travelled considerable distances to meetings, and our public officer, Andy Russell.

Lastly, I thank all members for supporting Friends of Grasslands and, through it, contributing to the care and preservation of a scarce resource and heritage: our native temperate grasslands and grassy ecosystems. We hope you received something of benefit from your dues, and I sincerely hope you will all be with us again in 2007.

# *Southern grasslands and swamps*

*Grasscover*

Seventeen people assembled at 10am on the morning of Saturday 16 December at the Wadbilliga "trigger plant grassland" for the beginning of FOG-Australian Native Plant Society weekend tour of southern grasslands and swamps organised by Margaret Ning and Roger Farrow.

To quote Margaret "The trigger plant grassland is a highly diverse little patch of open woodland with a grassy understorey. It takes in an adjacent drainage line with a canopy

of manna gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*) as well as more open secondary grassland with scattered snow gums (*E. pauciflora*) and Kybean gums (*E. parvula*) and clumps of low shrubs (*Baeckia* sp, *Dilwynnia* sp, *Gompholobium* sp, among others). Apart from the eponymous trigger plants there are, in most seasons, huge numbers of golden moth orchids (*Diuris monticola*), purple flag (*Patersonia*



*sericea*) and the rare and endangered pale golden moths orchid (*Diuris ochroma*), which flowers in mid-December.”

The trigger plant grassland is part of the *Karleila* property owned by FOG members, the Connaughton family. It is situated on the Tuross River off the Braidwood/Nimmitabel Road, just past the entrance to the Wadbilliga National Park. Much

time was spent exploring the grassland and the adjacent woodland, and despite the drought and lack of mass flowering of forbs for which the property is famous, there was much to see, although on this occasion no pale golden moth orchids were found.



After a late morning tea, the group travelled along the north Wadbilliga fire trail into Wadbilliga National Park to see the local *Acacia lucasii* and *A. kybiensis* and *Dampiera fusca*. Steve Douglas who was on the trip had earlier reported that the NSW Scientific Committee had made a Preliminary Determination to list *D. fusca* as endangered. Steve, with the assistance of several others, has been instrumental in bringing this about and hopes that someone will take up the cause of this species' status at the ACT and Federal levels now that the NSW situation has been clarified. There were several other stops along the fire trail to observe such unusual plants as *Chloanthes parviflorus* and we had lunch at a lookout over a patch of *Casuarina nana* heathland where Geoff did an involuntary disappearing act while checking out a *Persoonia*! This is a spectacular heathland/woodland complex now reserved in a National Park.



After the excitement of Wadbilliga, we moved on to Garuwanga for afternoon tea and a quick check of the property for some of the visitors before driving on to Nunnock Swamp campground via Nimmitabel, Bibbenluke and Cathcart. There the stalwarts put up their tents and joined together for the traditional wine and food evening as temperatures rapidly plummeted but no campfire was allowed because of the fire ban. Three pikers, who remain nameless, adjourned to the comforts of a Bombala pub for the night, while the remainder continued to share food, wine and stories before bunking down.

The campers were pleased by their choice to camp and were awoken by a wonderful morning chorus. However, no

one was that anxious to get going and so it was not until ten that the camp was packed, the pub dwellers had returned, and the group set out to explore the wonders of Nunnock Swamp. The swamp is a unique montane swamp fringed by woodland and forest. The swamps and woodland contain a variety of interesting plants including many forbs and orchids. As FOG has been to Nunnock on at least two other occasions, once when the swamp has been wet and once when dry, several were familiar with this area, which is delightful even in dry times. The swamp comprises a series of wet basins dominated by sedges and semi-aquatic plants such as *Nymphoides montana*, and *Isotoma fluviatilis* (underwater in wet years), separated by sedge heathlands with *Epacris* spp, *Callistemon pityoides*, and *Baloskion* sp among others, and fringed by sphagnum and swamp woodlands dominated by swamp gum *Eucalyptus ovata* and the shrub *Leonema phyllicifolium*.

It was not long before golden moths orchids were found and finally a Wilkinson's leek orchid (*Prasophyllum wilkinsoniorum*). After walking several kilometers the group was somewhat horrified to see the destruction wrought by 4WDs and trail bikes to the swamp (FOG has since written to the Minister for Conservation urging that resources are made available to manage such areas more appropriately). A treat for all was to see patches of potato orchid (*Gastrodia sesamoides*), in the forest previously seen (as far as I know) by only a couple members of the group.

In the afternoon we drove down the Cattleman's Track to the former property of June and Bob Wilkinson, (now part of the National Park) where there is a well-pre-



served hut. The group explored the old hut, which has an informative display of historical information. At this point more of the group departed, while those who stayed had a wander around this gently sloping secondary grassland and forest complex where natural regeneration is slowly converting much of the grassland back to forest. Of particular significance was the mass flowering of the narrow-leaved peppermint (*E. radiata*)

Thanks to Margaret and Roger for organizing a delightful trip to see how well our native vegetation can hang on even in the worst of times.

Photos: Secondary grassland at *Karleila*, *Dampiera fusca*, and stopping in Nunnock Swamp.

**FRIENDS OF GRASSLANDS INC**

**Supporting native grassy ecosystems**

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## *Friends of Grasslands Newsletter*

Do you want to subscribe to the newsletter? It comes out six times a year, and you can obtain it by joining FOG. You do not need to be an active member - some who join often have many commitments and only wish to receive the newsletter.

However, if you own or lease a property, are a member of a landcare or parkcare group, or actively interested in grassland and woodland conservation or revegetation, we hope we have something to offer you. We may assist by visiting sites and identifying native species and harmful weeds. We can suggest conservation and revegetation goals as well as management options, help document the site, and sometimes support applications for assistance, etc.

Of course you may wish to increase your own understanding of grasslands and woodlands, plant identification skills, etc. and so take a more active interest in our activities. Most activities are free and we also try to arrange transport (or car pool) to activities.

If you are already a member, why not encourage friends to join, or make a gift of membership to someone else? We will also send a complimentary newsletter to anyone who wants to know more about us.

## *How to join Friends of Grasslands*

Send us details of your name, address, telephone, fax, and e-mail, etc. You might also indicate your interests in grassland issues. Membership is \$20 for an individual or family; \$5 for students, unemployed or pensioners; and \$50 for corporations or organisations - the latter can request two newsletters be sent. Please make cheques payable to Friends of Grasslands Inc.

If you would like any further information about membership please contact Margaret Ning, or if you would like to discuss FOG issues contact Kim Pullen, Janet Russell or Geoff Robertson. Contact details are given in the box above. We look forward to hearing from you.

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