



News of Friends of Grasslands

Supporting native grassy ecosystems

March-April 2011

ISSN 1832-6315

Program

March

SAT 5 MAR, 9.30am-3.30pm. **FOG Working Bee, Old Cooma Common Grassland Reserve.** See page 2.

THURS-FRI 10-11 MAR. **Indigenous Values Workshop 1, Making string, glue and baskets,** with Rod Mason. See page 2 and flier.

SUN 13 MAR, 9am-4pm. **FOG/Fenner Working Bee, Stirling Park, Yarralumla.** See page 2.

TUES 15 MAR, 5.30 for 6pm. **FOG Annual General Meeting.** See page 2.

April

SAT 9 APR, 9am to noon, **Hall Cemetery working bee.** Morning tea supplied. Inquiries: Andy (andy.russell@fog.org.au or 6251 8949).

10 (SUN) & 16 (SAT) APR, 10am-noon, **Heritage week walks at Cooleman Ridge** FOG members are invited to attend. See page 2.

WED-THURS 20-21 APR. **Indigenous Values Workshop 2, Resource flows in the landscape,** with Rod Mason. See page 2 and flier.

It is membership renewal time

A membership renewal form for 2011 is enclosed, and if you do not renew this will be your last newsletter. Please complete the renewal form it carefully. You may pay by cheque, money order or EFT. Annual rates are only \$20 for families/individuals, \$5 for students/concessions, and \$50 for organisations. Donations, while not tax deductible, are very welcome. The form is also on our website (www.fog.org.au). For any queries contact Margaret on 02 6241 4065 or margaret.ning@fog.org.au.

In this issue

Program & upcoming FOG events

News roundup

FOG advocacy

Cultivation corner

Report 2010

John Blay on the Bundian Pass

Looking back and forward, the FOG-Fenner Group

How to grow weeds

Knob sedge and short-stem sedge



**FOG
visit
to
Mount
Oak**

Gidja showing
the map of
Mount Oak
above.



Jandamarra
Above, and
his painting of
bogong moths
Left.

Corroboree
beetle
feeding
on
bursaria
Below.



Upcoming FOG Events

*Please register for FOG activities with the **FOG contact person** who can assist with directions and possibly car pooling. By registering, you assist FOG to organise any catering and to provide you with other information you may need.*

Indigenous values workshops
Making string, glue and baskets
Thurs-Fri 10-11 March, Garuwanga
Resource flows in the landscape
Wed-Thurs 20-21 April, Garuwanga

These workshops are an important FOG initiative and have been advertised in previous FOG newsletters.

The cost is \$25 for two lunches and morning and afternoon teas. For those wishing to stay at Garuwanga before, during or after the workshop, accommodation is free.

A flier on the workshops is enclosed with this newsletter.

FOG Annual General Meeting
Conservation Council,
5:30 for 6:00 pm, Tues 15 March

Please help FOG by coming to your AGM and participating in discussion of plans for 2011. There will be nibbles from 5:30 pm. After the AGM, please join us for dinner at a nearby Indian Restaurant.

For catering purposes and if you are joining us for dinner, please contact Isobel Crawford (6257 1860 or isobel.crawford@fog.org.au) by Thursday 10 March.

To receive the meeting papers in advance and/or offer your apologies please contact Al Gabb (al.gabb@fog.org.au or 0433 357 654).

The Conservation Council is at 3 Childers St, Acton (not far from the Street Theatre).

FOG OCCGR Working Bee
9:30 – 3:30 pm, Sat 5 March

Attending a working bee at Old Cooma Common Grassland Reserve (OCCGR) provides a great opportunity to visit a good example of an interesting and diverse basalt grassland on the Southern Tablelands. You

will see expansive views of the Monaro landscape, develop skills, and catch up with other FOG members.

OCCGR is located off the southern end of Polo Flat Road, Cooma, and has been established by FOG and Cooma Monaro Shire Council. It is fascinating to visit any time. It contains two threatened and one rare plant species. There are some working bee tasks not using chemicals.

At lunchtime FOG helps with lunch expenses. Petrol costs of 15 cents a kilometre can also be paid. For further details contact Margaret Ning on 6241 4065 or margaret.ning@fog.org.au.

FOG/Fenner Working Bee
Stirling Park, Yarralumla
9am - 4:00 pm, Sun 13 March

The plan is to expand the woody weed free area at Stirling Ridge where Australia's second largest population of button wrinklewort is being overrun. This is inspiring work where the fruits of our previous work can be seen in a rejuvenated grassy understorey.

We plan to meet beside Alexandra Drive midway between Mariner Place and Hopetoun Circuit. We will set up camp about 300m further west than for previous work parties. Those arriving later can find us on the north-east side of the ridge by the northern fence. Please bring drinking water, sun protection and sturdy footwear.

You are welcome at any time, but the more people who are available at 9 am the easier it will be to brief participants.

Please register with Jamie Pittock for lunch and insurance purposes: pittockj@yahoo.com.

Heritage week walks
Coolleman Ridge
10am-noon, 10&16 April

The Coolleman Ridge Park Group has asked FOG to partner in their activities during Heritage Week. It has organised two walks on the ridge behind Chapman, and are inviting anyone interested to join them.

Sun 10 April. Doug Tinney will lead a walk along the trail which is regularly weeded by students of Chapman Primary School. Doug will point out the remnant eucalypts, the native tomato, the native cherry, acacia, cassinia, kangaroo grass and other native species. There are magnificent views of the Tidbinbilla and Bullen ranges, and to the city. Meet at the top of Guinness Place.

Sat 16 April. A 2.7km stroll of the circuit trail, with views of the city, mountains and valleys, and information from Gosta Lynga about the past, the plants and the animals. The trail is not suitable for strollers or wheelchairs. A brochure will be provided. Meet at the Kathner St entrance to the ridge.

For more information contact linda.spinaze@fog.org.au, or Arminel 6231 7392.

FOG Membership **To join or renew**

FOG membership entitles you to receive our newsletter and e-Bulletin, to attend FOG's many and diverse activities, and much more.

The cost is small: \$20 for individuals and families, \$5 for students/concessions and \$50 for organisations. Membership is due on 1 January each year.

Membership forms are available on our website: www.fog.org.au and you may pay by cheque or electronically.

While donations are not tax deductible, they are always very welcome.

For inquiries contact Margaret Ning on 02 6241 4065 or membership@fog.org.au.

Meet the Mt Oakies

Geoff Robertson

SAT 29 JAN On a perfect summer day, fourteen FOG members, including our hosts, Gidja Walker and Philip Jensen, visited Mt Oak, which has a long natural and cultural history.

Just beyond the front gate, Gidja, with the occasional addition by Philip, provided an overview of ecology of Mt Oak and their attempts to deal with the weed issues. She told the story of the Mt Oak community and its transition from a collective community living on the land to a property primarily managed for biodiversity. The title is held by the Free Land Association, a trust, which was established to protect the title and retain it in community ownership. Gidja, who is an ecologist and teacher, is one of the trustees, while the Mt Oak Community Association manages the land

More recently, a conservation covenant had been taken out over a large portion (880ha) of the property. Excluded from the covenant are the areas where dwellings have been established, the orchards, and other areas that have been modified. Gidja produced a map to point out many features of the 1,140ha property, with its largely apple box woodland and natural grassland and everyone looked and listened with fascination.

While some car pooling had already taken place on the trip to Mt Oak, there was further consolidation, and then the group drove the six kilometres that runs along the eastern edge of the property. Our initial stop was near a large ephemeral wetland, Bullanamang Lake, a Wetland of National Significance, which is not part of Mt Oak, but which the Mt Oakies would like to add to the property someday. We started to walk up the hill and came across a number of *Desmodium brachypodium*, a first for many of us. We did not get to the hill top where an undescribed species of



mallee-form peppermint grows, but from the side of the hill we could see wonderful Monaro vistas to the east.

Back in the cars we negotiated the road, which my Camry and its five passengers found challenging. We arrived at the crest of the hill with grassland to the front and rear of us. We walked a little way south into a woodland area where the vegetation changed, especially on the southern slope. Nearby was an area where there were some buildings, a reminder of the time when many community members lived there.

Our next stop was a community dwelling where we enjoyed the lunches that we had brought, supplemented by tea and coffee. Jan-damarra, an aboriginal elder who currently lives at Mt Oak, joined us and played several didgeridoos, explaining how to make the various sounds. He also provided some insights into Ngarigo culture and talked about some of his work as an elder especially with the younger folk. Then he revealed his artistic side, showing a number of his paintings and explaining the symbolism. It was a treat to listen to and learn from him.

After lunch we walked along the erosion gully, and then the group split, with the more-nerdy joining Philip in another dwelling to look at

various websites linked to the Mt Oak website, while the outdoor types explored the property some more with Gidja. Both subgroups were pleased with their choices.

Unfortunately Mt Oak has many weeds and it was informative to learn what has been tried and how it has worked.

More information may be found in an article on Mt Oak in our September-October 2010 newsletter and on the fabulous Mt Oak website. A very enjoyable day was had by all. Gidja and Philip are enthusiastic FOG members and were very informative. Thank you Mt Oakies for your hospitality, and to Margaret Ning for organizing the trip.

This was Margaret's and my second trip to Mt Oak. Last time we saw very different sites. There is a lot to see there and we shall definitely visit

Two messages from Margaret

It takes a lot of effort to process membership renewals and to chase up stragglers. Please renew quickly, or let me know if you won't be renewing, if you haven't already.

I have some Waproo applicators that make cutting and daubing and other weeding easy.

My contact details are margaret.ning@fog.org.au or 6241 4065.

Blitz at OCCGR

Margaret Ning

From 25 to 27 January Jim Williamson and I used our quad bikes to target the St Johns wort on Old Cooma Common Grassland Reserve (OCCGR). While we originally planned that one person would boom spray and that the other would spot spray, it was too windy for this to be carried out. Some boom spraying was still possible, however, and at least the weather was sufficiently fine for the whole three days to be devoted to attacking the wort, as previous efforts had been curtailed a little by rain. The mud map of the site, prepared by Jim, shows the proportion of the Common we covered.

On 5 March a FOG working bee will be held at the Common (see cover page and page 2). We will be using a range of methods, to target the most invasive weeds on the site. We hope that some new FOG people will attend. It is great opportunity to learn new skills and to meet fellow FOGgers.

Pauline Lynga

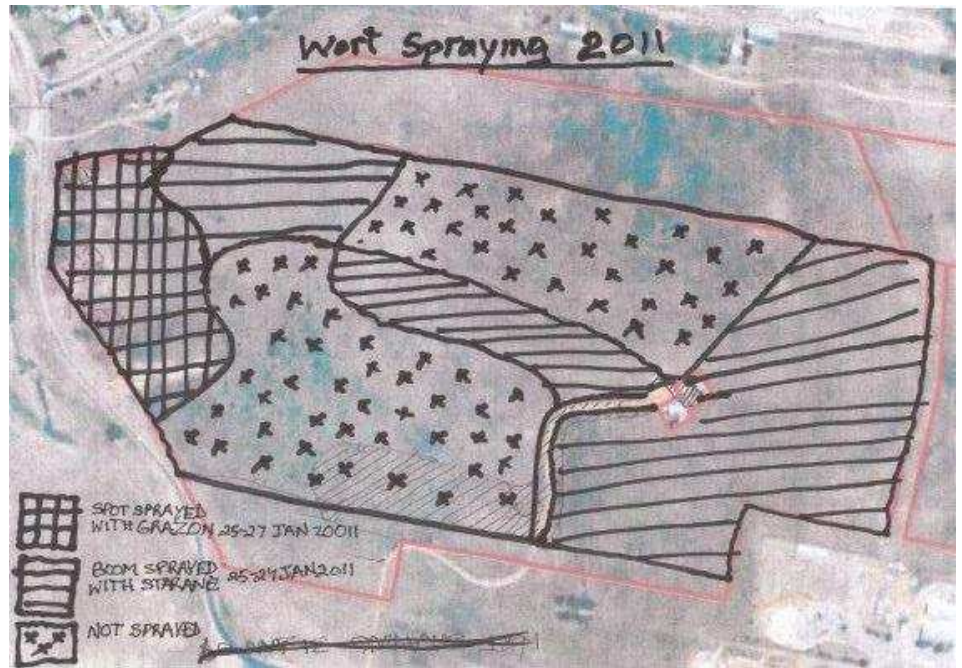
Geoff Robertson

It was very sad to learn of the death, on Tuesday 18 January, of Pauline who for many years has been a pivotal member of Cooleman Ridge Parkcare Group and a long time FOG member. In FOG's earlier times she provided many illustrations of how to identify and document plants – she compiled a truly impressive herbarium. Visits to her and Gosta's lovely home were always very welcoming.

FOG wishes Gosta and family our deepest and heartfelt sympathy. She will live on in those whose love of Canberra's nature she inspired.

Newsletter available electronically

You can receive the newsletter electronically. The electronic version is in colour. To arrange, contact margaret.ning@fog.org.au.



ACT ALG survey

Sarah Sharp

The Southern ACT Catchment Group (SCG) has received funding under an Australian Government Community Action Grant to undertake a project on African love grass (ALG). The project will produce educational materials on the impacts of ALG, best-practice control and identify priority areas. It will also increase community participation and improve coordination in ALG control and containment.

The project will, amongst other things, investigate the likely future distribution of ALG, and prioritise control areas. As part of this, we want to get as much information as we can on the current distribution of the grass. I will be undertaking a systematic survey of the major roads in ACT and neighbouring NSW.

This will be backed up by a survey undertaken by as many people as possible in a range of sites and land uses, to provide records of where the species is currently found, and the abundance of the grass at that site. Records of where the species does not occur are also important.

To find out you can help check out the SCG website www.sactcg.org.au. Completed survey forms are required by 2 May.

Seeing grasslands flickr site

David Wong

There is now a blog and flickr site for the *Seeing Grasslands* project at <http://seeinggrasslands.wordpress.com/> and <http://www.flickr.com/groups/seeinggrasslands/>. We are hoping that interested people will join and contribute to the flickr site.

Seeing Grasslands is a project that aims to raise the profile of grasslands and to encourage an interest in this highly threatened ecosystem as well as in nature and photography through community participation, online initiatives and exhibition. It is funded by the 2010 ACT Environment Grants and is administered through the Molonglo Catchment Group. Other non-government groups involved in the project include FOG and Photoaccess.

A report on the project and a workshop organised by FOG was included in our last newsletter – Editor.

FOG website

The FOG website (www.fog.org.au) is now well established and attracting over 2,000 visits per month. If there is anything you'd like to contribute to the site, let us know: web-manager@fog.org.au.

Turkish blue devil

Linda Spinaze

In June last year, Roger and I finally visited Turkey, which had been on our wish list for quite some time.

Apart from being overwhelmed by the Iznik tiles in Istanbul, we were stunned when we left our seaside hotel near Pergamon, about 300km south of Istanbul, to find many blue devils in the field opposite our hotel.

I had thought that this was an endemic Australian genus, as is the case with many Australian species, but on returning home, I discovered that there are 230 species worldwide of this amazing plant.

Wikipedia tells us that this grassland species is centred in South America, but there is a perennial native in Europe, and is often found on sea-shores. Our hotel in Turkey was 200 m from the Mediterranean. Wikipedia goes on to say that the roots have been used as an asparagus substitute, and some species have potent anti-inflammatory properties.

As a physiotherapist, I should grow this plant and feed it to my clients!!!!

Photo provided by Linda is a Turkish species. According to Flora of NSW, Australia has seven species, three are introduced. It also states that there are 250 species worldwide—Editor.

Ian Fraser's new book

Grasscover

Ian Fraser has been a long-time member and FOG supporter. In fact his name appears in the original membership list.

It shouldn't be difficult to find Ian's new book, which retails for \$50, *Bush Capital Year - A Natural History of the Canberra Region*. Ian's talks and writings always approach things from a new angle, giving his listeners/readers some new insights to ponder over. Well Ian you have done it again!



According to Ian, "The Australian Capital Territory is a treasure trove for naturalists, despite being without a coastline, without rainforest or without deserts. A wealth of biodiversity is found there, due to the close proximity of three major habitat types: the great western woodland grassy plains bump up against the inland edge of the coastal hinterland mountain forests, while the whole south-eastern Australian Alps system reaches its northern limit in the Brindabella Ranges. Each of these habitats has its own rich suite of plants and animals, so a great diversity of life can be found within an hour's drive of Parliament House".

The book introduces the fauna, flora, habitats and reserves of the ACT and includes the most recent research available. There are ten stories which discuss either a species or a group of species, such as mosses and mountain grasshoppers. Many of the stories are written from the organism's point of view. Beautiful paintings complement the text and allow better visualisation of the stories and the subjects.

Conservation properties sold

Groundcover

In recent months, the newsletter has advertised two properties belonging to FOG members in the hope that they would be sold to people who would continue to manage them for conservation. Both are now in the

process of being sold to new owners who will manage them for conservation. Hopefully the new owners will be joining FOG.

Grass gossip

Grasscover

I was recently copied into some emails that I thought I should share.

Hi Margaret (Ning) - No doubt I'm way behind with this one. I noticed a low-growing grass with maroon-purple inflorescences growing in the red-gravel around the traffic lights at Kingsford Smith and Ginninderra Drives. Being suspicious of lush newcomers I showed Jenny Conolly. She handed it to Steve Taylor (of Parks and Conservation Service) who has named it as small burr grass (*Tragus australianus*). On a longer bus trip to Woden yesterday I saw several other areas of the grass south of Belconnen. Wouldn't it be good if the emergence of such species came with migrants' travel details!, Rosemary Blemings (23 Jan).

Hello Rosemary - Andrew Paget first showed me this grass on one of the median strips where one departs the Tuggeranong Expressway at the Cotter Rd turnoff. I have seen it at other spots like that. It's a pretty cute little grass, and I'm glad to see that we have it on the north side too. I have only ever seen it on the gravel areas like that. Thanks for bringing it to my attention. Cheers, Marg (25 Jan).

ANU move to cut trees slated by green group

EXCLUSIVE

By Rosslyn Beeby
Science and Environment Reporter

An Australian National University plan to cut down 33 native trees to build a new public policy centre, car park and coach parking bay has angered local conservationists.

More than 20 of the trees are yellow box, long-leaved box and Blakely's red gum, all protected as critically endangered grassy box woodland remnants under federal environmental laws.

They are also among 18 woodland species recognised as ecologically important food trees for native birds, bats and squirrel gliders.

The ANU wants to remove the native trees to build a three-storey extension to its Crawford School building at the rear of Old Canberra House on the Acton Peninsula.

The ACT Friends of Grasslands has accused the ANU of breaching environmental protection conditions imposed by a previous federal approval to allow building works on the site.

The conservation group, which has more than 200 members, has also questioned why the ANU has failed to finalise a draft management plan to protect biodiversity across the university campus.

The ANU's public affairs staff and ANU Green environmental management office could not be contacted yesterday for comment.

The new building will accommodate a \$111.7 million national public policy institute announced earlier this year by former prime minister Kevin Rudd and ANU vice-chancellor Professor Ian Chubb.

The new Australian National Institute for Public Policy is intended to be similar to Harvard University's prestigious Kennedy School of

Government and will aim to foster closer ties between the ANU and senior government policy-makers.

The ANU has also flagged plans to build a "public policy precinct" around the new centre.

Earlier this month, plans for the project were referred to the federal environment department for public comment and assessment under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

ACT Friends of Grasslands has already lodged an objection, claiming the ANU plans fail to address conservation of "a listed ecological community" as well as rare grassland plants.

The organisation has also accused the ANU of failing to fulfil conditions imposed under a previous EPBC Act approval three years ago for a building development on the same site.

The group says former federal environment minister Peter Garrett required ANU to rehabilitate disturbed areas of land adjacent to the Crawford School building.

"Instead, it appears the ANU has sown these areas with exotic species, a number of which have proven invasive of the remaining grassy woodland habitat," the letter said.

The ANU proposal states the cleared site "will be reinstated with trees to match those species removed and native to the locality".

However, the architect's plans suggests the critically endangered box woodland species will be replaced with Chinese elms and a nursery cultivar, *Eucalyptus mannifera* "little spotty", which is frequently used by councils as a drought-tolerant, small street tree.

Eight of the trees to be cleared to make way for the new building and car parks have been listed by the ANU arborist as "of high significance".

FOG advocacy

Naarilla Hirsch

The first submission for the year was under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation 1999 (EPBC Act). It was on the proposed redevelopment of Jamieson House at St John's Church in Reid. The proposed development should not impact directly on natural temperate grassland or golden sun moth (GSM) habitat at the site, although there is uncertainty about the impact of afternoon shading of GSM habitat. FOG asked that the proposed program of native grassland improvement, including removal of significant weed species and exotic grasses from the site and replacement with suitable native grasses and forbs, be a formal commitment of the proposed redevelopment, and that it be maintained and monitored for at least five years.

A proposed expansion of the Mugga Lane Resource Management Centre, ACT was also put out for public comment. While FOG recognises the need for the ACT Government to provide sites for essential infrastructure such as waste management, it cannot support the proposal in its current form because of the steady whittling away of important remnant sites containing threatened ecological communities and species. FOG's specific concerns are the lack of an accompanying statement about the long-term plans for waste-management, off-sets, and the strategy already in place to ensure the adequate protection and management of woodlands.

The Commonwealth has determined that the proposed development of Ngungun 2C in Gungahlin is a *controlled action* under the EPBC Act, so the ACT Land Development Agency asked for public comment on some *Preliminary Documentation* on this development. The documents included a proposed strategic approach to the conservation and environmental assessment of GSM sites in the Canberra area. FOG had several concerns about this, including the lack of review of the strategy by independent experts, no commitment to adopting or implementing the final strategy by the ACT Government,

Continued next page

FOG e-Bulletin

The FOG e-Bulletin contains the latest information on FOG happenings and more. It contains no pictures so its size is minimal.

If you haven't been receiving it, and you want to, please provide Margaret (membership@fog.org.au) with your e-mail address. Also, please let Margaret know of address changes.

lack of development of a recovery plan for the moth that is agreed to by all stakeholders, and the need for more work to be done on establishing the status of the moth at this (and other) sites. FOG reiterated its opposition to any developments that necessitate the use of offsets. In our view, there should be no development in high conservation areas, and losses from development should be minimized in any area with a conservation value. Having said this, we made a number of comments about the offset section of the *Preliminary Documentation*. In particular, FOG pointed out that conservation measures taken in the past to offset losses occurring at that time cannot be used again to offset further losses, that offsets should be in place before the development commences, and that the proposed offset ratios were too low given the history of inadequate resourcing of conservation reserves and other environmental problems such as weed control. FOG's view is that offsets should be aimed at *net gain*, not maintenance of the status quo, if there is any hope of these species and ecosystems eventually becoming sufficiently common in the landscape to no longer need to be listed as endangered.

The NSW Department of Industry and Investment asked for public comment on *Statutory Review Issues Paper concerning the Noxious Weeds Act 1993*. FOG supported a number of the proposed changes. In particular, FOG saw the introduction of a permitted list approach in NSW to be a useful step in preventing the spread of new weeds into high conservation areas, and suggested that a key reform would be provision for public nominations of species to be listed as weeds to an independent scientific assessment committee. FOG also supported proposals to delegate Class 4 notifications to *Local Control Authorities*, and to include in the Act specific provisions for the management of conflict species, such as those in commercial use but are also weedy, for example, pines. *The full text of FOG submissions appears on our website.*

Cultivation Corner:

Rock Isotome - Janet Russell

As always, I take my camera out and inspect the garden looking for inspiration for my next FOG article. One of the stars of the garden at the moment is rock isotome (*Isotoma axillaris*).

The NSW Herbarium advises that this plant grows in crevices on rocky cliffs, especially granite and sandstone outcrops, in shallow sandy

soils of slopes and around rock waterholes. In the wild, they seem to have an amazing capacity to germinate where there appears to be no soil to support them and they make a wonderful natural landscaping feature. They belong to the *Lobeliaceae* family. The only other Australian members of this family are the genera of *Lobelia* and *Pratia*.

Rock isotome is a Southern Tablelands plant but also grows in coastal areas. A volunteer at the Eurobodalla Regional Botanical Gardens told me that this plant had been prolifically self-seeding in the gardens where it was not wanted. It self-seeds in our garden but it has not reached epic proportions. Perhaps, I should have added the word "yet". In fact, we have been waiting for it to establish itself outside in the wildflower garden, and this year it has appeared for the first time.

We bought two plants in 2006 and have had a succession of plants volunteer ever since. It establishes itself on the edge of our courtyard and paths as well as amongst the rocks. We had caterpillar infestations on one plant which were not discovered until they had done a lot

of damage. In hot weather the established plants that started flowering in November quickly go to seed and become dry-looking, however, they respond very well to being cut back. The specimen in the photos germinated during the wet weather event we had early in December and is still looking fresh and green.



The seed pods need to be collected before they get too dry, otherwise the tiny brown seed will all be dispersed. I have collected some seeds this year and thought I might do some broadcasting in late winter. I am assuming that they will germinate and don't need too much fuss made of them. I quite often inspect seed under the microscope as I find the huge diversity of seeds fascinating. Rock isotome seeds are brown and rectangular with a folded lip on one side. They have a sheen which gives off microscopic rainbow-coloured flecks under the light. If anyone is interested in raising them from seed, contact me and I will get them to you.

In spite of the recent drying weather, there is still plenty of colour in the garden from rock isotome, paper daisies (*Xerochrysum* sp. and *Leucochrysum albicans*), yellow buttons (*Chrysocephalum apiculatum*), bluebells (*Wahlenbergia* spp.), blue fan flowers (*Scaevola* sp.) and various brachyscome daisy species. I shall cut back the dry grasses to show the forbs off to better advantage if we get this cool spell that is promised.

Report 2010

Geoff Robertson, President

Dear fellow FOG members, much has been achieved in 2010 and while I often heard it said that FOG relies on the efforts of a few, the contrary is actually true. Many FOG members contribute in so many ways. The challenge is for the FOG committee, and the president in particular, to understand and appreciate this effort and to nudge it along if the effort strays a little from time to time.

As I have signalled on earlier occasions I will not stand for president at the AGM. I am very pleased that the committee have worked very constructively to ensure a successful transition. In particular, it is great news that John Fitz Gerald has agreed to stand as president at the AGM on 15 March - I am convinced he will do a fantastic job. Another piece of very good news is that Heather Sweet has agreed to take over as newsletter editor from the next issue. I know she will likewise do a fantastic job.

John Fitzgerald and Linda Spinaze recently took over as FOG program co-ordinators, when Janet Russell and I stood down - they are already producing an excellent program. A separate report on the program will be circulated with the AGM papers.

Naarilla Hirsch will continue to drive our advocacy effort (see separate report). The advocacy group meets regularly and is extremely well focused - a powerhouse!

The secretarial function is shared, and here special thanks to Al, Sue Mathams (minute taker), Naarilla, Margaret and Janet. Margaret continues to do so a fantastic job on membership - she is able to stay in personal touch with so many people and she contributes in so many other ways.

Sandra masterly controls FOG's complex finances, with help from others. Stephen Horn will be assisting Sandra in future and has found

a new auditor for us. Unfortunately, the accounts are not yet finalised (they will be presented at the AGM) and reported upon in the next newsletter.

Sarah Sharp is a very valuable asset to the FOG's committee showing much initiative. Apart from contributions on a whole range of fronts, she has taken on the responsibility for FOG publications (see separate report).

A special thanks to the committee members who have not already been mentioned. They are very wise and a great strength to FOG's deliberations.

Isobel has represented FOG on many occasions, organised FOG's card (check it out at the AGM), and plays an important role on many activities. Tony is active on many fronts and produces our e-Bulletin which many of you find very useful.

David Eddy is a stalwart on many issues. In 2010 he organised our new FOG display board and continues to play an important conservation role in the Monaro and ACT, and particularly Old Cooma Common Grassland Reserve (OCCGR). Kim our immediate past president is always prepared to take on a number of tasks.

Our on-ground work achieves remarkable results. Despite being a very difficult site to work with, FOG persists with OCCGR and a remarkable effort is made by our regular volunteers (close to 50 different individuals over the years), and the extraordinary efforts of Jim and Margaret who do regular blitzes there. David, Jim and Margaret are also active members of the OCCGR management committee. David and Margaret also represent FOG on the Monaro Regional Weeds Committee.

Jamie Pittock provides extraordinary leadership with the FOG-Fenner group - see separate report.

Andy Russell has proved persistence can pay dividends and made some remarkable headway at Hall Ceme-

tery and has recruited a team to help. With agreement of Cemetery management, bursaria have successfully been planted in the woodland area. Andy is also FOG's public officer and he and Janet made an outstanding contribution to FOG through their Open Garden in October last.

Linda has taken over organising FOG efforts at African lovegrass monitoring at Scottsdale. For someone who is very committed on other activities, she squeezes in a lot of FOG effort.

In 2010 we finalised our report on the golden sun moth (GSM), a huge effort. Special thanks to Will Osborne and Anett Richter. An extra special thanks to Sarah Hnatiuk who put in an extraordinary contribution on this project. Hopefully we can resurrect this work sometime.

The newsletter continues to be of a high standard. The *Nov-Dec 2010 News of Friends of Grasslands* was the 86th issue. Regular contributions from Michael Bedingfield, Janet Russell and Naarilla Hirsch and many others greatly contribute to its success.

The website, under the masterful control of Richard Bomford continues to score many hits. The highest average daily hit seems to have occurred in March 2010, 751 hits a day. Even in January 2011, the average daily hit was 646. The website is also used for research, examining our submissions, and to find out about FOG's events. It is a source of membership and other enquiries. Also members can renew via the website.

FOG provides many other services to its members. Our inquiry line is very busy. Our advice is sought from many government agencies, industry and other conservation and farming sources.

FOG continues to break new ground, to promote the cause of grassy ecosystems. Many new issues occupy FOG's attention. Three stand out: first, finding suitable offsets that are

substantive, practical and long-lasting, second, grassy-ecosystem management and restoration based on proper bush regeneration practices and innovative science, and third, marrying up grassy-ecosystem conservation and Indigenous values. In respect of the latter, I would highly recommend your participation in the Indigenous values workshops that FOG is organising in March and April.

FOG plays an active role in other conservation groups such as the conservation council, BoB Molonglo and Gungahlin, the Limestone Plains Group, etc. FOG has been playing a major role in Kosciuszko to Coast (K2C). Currently I am Chair of its executive committee and David Eddy is also on its committee.

Finally, may I say that being an active FOG member has been very rewarding, and being FOG's president a great personal honour. I would like to thank the numerous people who have brought projects to FOG and/or who have always been so responsive to requests to do some most extraordinary tasks.

Membership 2010

Margaret Ning

At the end of December, FOG had 221 financial members, which is a net increase of 15, and includes 45 new members. That means that around 30 members did not renew in 2010.

It is always a big job to chase up renewals and so I hope that anyone reading this report will ensure that his/her membership is up to date. Many members also generously make donations, which helps us make a small surplus. For over ten years now we have kept our membership fees low: \$20 a person or family, \$5 concession, and \$50 for corporate. This represents good value for money, especially as, at many of our events, refreshments are provided for nothing or at nominal cost.

The recent introduction of EFT has

made the job easier for members and FOG and we generally have few problems with people paying membership on line without completing the form correctly. People not requesting receipts also helps to reduce the workload.

Attendance at newsletter despatch nights is good on most occasions, but we need to see some new faces there, even if attendance is occasional. Contact Margaret if you can help with this.

Advocacy in 2010

Naarilla Hirsch

2010 was a busy year on the advocacy front. There were 34 submissions on ACT and NSW issues, covering development proposals, the ACT Commissioner for Sustainability and Environment (CSE) investigations, reviews of legislation, plans of management, and inquiries and strategic planning documents. The submissions may be seen by looking at our website.

In addition there were letters to government, including letters of support for funding projects, on a range of issues. Much time was taken up in planning and participation in the CSE's grassland forum. Developing FOG's position on *offsets*, which involved a workshop and follow-up meetings, also took up much time but greatly assisted in many of our submissions where *offsets* were a consistent theme. Another major task was to represent FOG at a number of community consultation processes for development projects and at other environmental groups meetings.

FOG publications 2010

Sarah Sharp

In 2009, the ACT government handed over the remaining *Grassland Flora*, and in 2010 the proceeds of the sales of *Grassland Flora*, with a formal agreement that FOG would use these funds to print and distribute future *Grassland Flora* and produce a new book *Woodland Flora, a field guide to the Southern Tablelands*, and that more generally funds

would be used to provide other publications and media to promote grassy ecosystems. The FOG committee has appointed me as its Publications Co-ordinator, and established a steering committee whose members consist of Isobel Crawford, David Eddy, Geoff Robertson, Bernadette O'Leary, Rainer Rehwinkel and me to oversight FOG publications.

Work on *Woodland Flora* is well underway. A list of species to be included has been prepared, species have been divided up between authors (Eddy, Mallinson, Rehwinkel and Sharp) for preparation of first draft of text, photos are being collated, and the writing up of each species has begun. Our plan is to have draft entries prepared by end April, finalise the text by end October and publish and launch the publication by December. The distribution process should be established by Feb 2012.

Stocks of *Grassland Flora* were down to 16 by the end of 2010, having sold over 700 copies in 2010. After some deliberation, Isobel, Rainer, David and I revised the text and 3,000 copies of the new edition are being printed, as it is expected that there will be a surge of demand once the *Woodland Flora* is published.

Our publication stock also includes the *Grassy Ecosystems, Management Kit* (paper version and CD). Copies of these are available from me.

More reports 2010

Unfortunately, there is insufficient space to include all the reports that were available. The following reports have been held over, but will be included in AGM papers to be distributed by Al Gabb - *Editor*.

- *FOG program 2010* (Geoff Robertson)
- *Con Council Bio Group 2010* (Sarah Sharp)
- *E-Bulletin 2010* (Tony Lawson)
- *Molonglo BoB 2010* (Sarah Sharp)

John Blay on the Bundian Pass

Geoff Robertson

MON 4 OCT On a mild spring afternoon, I sat in John Blay's study listening to him tell me about the work he was doing on the Bundian Way. I had not met John before but I realised that I should have as he is an author who writes about our local history and environment.

Currently he is finalising a book on the Bundian Way and *working on* a survey of the natural and cultural heritage *values* of the tract from the *high country* to the sea *at* Twofold Bay, *especially looking at the relationships between grasslands and forests*, so they can be captured and communicated. I had heard of this project before but it seemed a little shrouded in mystery and a little too far south to capture my full attention.

For the early settlers there was a great physical barrier between the coast and the Monaro, and Eden could not service settlers from the tableland. The Aboriginal people, apart from showing settlers their whaling expertise at Twofold Bay, also showed the settlers the tracks that they had used for thousands (maybe tens of thousands) of years between the coast and the Monaro and also how to get into Gippsland which was unsettled at the time.

The Bundian Way is named after the Bundian Pass, which was the easiest walking route from the tablelands to the coastal plains. It skirts Bondi Creek, the old Bondi Station and the vicinity referred to by names spelt as Bundyang, Boondyang and Bondia in early accounts.

Its route mostly follows rugged country and local roads and tracks. One spur continues on to Omeo and Gippsland or to the western plains via the Omeo gap. The Bundian Way passes through Delegate and the village of Towamba, finishing near Boydtown on Twofold Bay. There are many records of how aborigines showed settlers the way, which was then followed by explorers, then horsemen and cattlemen.

As an ancient pathway it was one of the remarkable trade and cultural routes of Australia, not only connecting the moth sites of the high country with the whale places on the coast but also Gippsland and the western dis-

tricts of Victoria and beyond via the Omeo Gap. It has been suggested that predated the Silk Road, the Roman roads and other great roads of world antiquity. Many traces of the Bundian Way still remain in the present day.

The Bundian way is part of a network of Aboriginal path ways in Yuin, Ngarigo, Jaitmathang and Bidawal country. These connected the people and their ceremonies, as well as sacred places, and provided trade routes across the continent. They were particularly used to travel to and from places where special events took place, such as whaling and springtime ceremonies in Twofold Bay and moth hunting and ceremonies in the high country during summer.

Now the Bundian Way has a symbolic role that demonstrates the Aboriginal people's deep connections with their much-varied environment and how, in an ever-changing world, some things remain. It has also become an important element of our shared history.

From a scientific perspective, the way passes through many Aboriginal landscapes and demonstrates some of the variety and antiquity of their land management practices. It is possible eucalyptus speciesisation led to its domination of the landscape as a consequence of firestick use from about 40 to 50,000 years ago. Many scientists say the series of eucalypts (and the communities they dominate) between the tree line and the sea have universal significance and deserve the highest heritage recognition. Further research along the way should help us to understand how traditional Aboriginal land management shaped the complexity of the landscape and its vegetation patterns, and may well assist in developing new modern approaches to land management. Certainly, enhanced understanding of the Aboriginal landscape will bring greater respect for country.



Looking back and forward, the FOG-Fenner Group *Jamie Pittock*

Conservation of the grasslands at Yarramundi Reach and grassy woodlands at Stirling Park was the focus of the second year of a FOG project undertaken in conjunction with the Fenner School of Environment and Society at ANU. Six work parties were undertaken with an average of 14 volunteers contributing 90 hours work on each day, and an average of 46m³ of weed material being removed. Our thanks go to the many volunteers who contributed over 500 hours to the restoration of these key habitats.

This work was supported with welcome funding from the National Capital Authority (NCA) for supplies and equipment.

At Stirling Park vast areas of woody weeds are gradually being removed from amongst the nation's second largest population of the endangered button wrinklewort. Regeneration of understorey vegetation with the rains in spring 2010 has been remarkable and inspiring. Common woody weeds are being removed in vast numbers. Small infestations of particularly nasty weeds are being controlled, namely broom, serrated tussock, African lovegrass and St John's wort. Sadly, the ACT's first infestation of Maderia vine was located in the park.

Also notable are a new tranche of woody weeds emerging from garden plantings, including desert ash and Chinese pistachio. In winter 2010 sixty woodland trees and shrubs were planted into disturbed areas of the park, strategically, to reconnect habitat. A FOG nature walk at Stirling Park was

fully subscribed and involved a lot of local residents.

At Yarra-mundi Reach our work to find methods to replace invading Chilean needle grass, among other horrors, with native grasses continues. While we have had a lot of success killing the exotic grasses we have not yet succeeded in facilitating

growth of indigenous species from seed and thatch. In spring 2010 some 300 cells of four local species were planted in trial plots. However the massive growth of grass and weeds following good rains in late 2010 has made work on the site more difficult. FOG continues to monitor both sites to identify more optimal conservation techniques.

In late 2010 FOG collaborated with Conservation Volunteers Australia, which led three more woody weed removal parties, two at Stirling Park and one at a new site at Scrivener's Hut, between State and Capital Circles (west).

In 2011 FOG has a third year of planned activities, including one nature walk and seven work parties at Scrivener's Hut, Stirling Park and Yarramundi Reach. We have again received welcome financial support from the NCA for this work.

FOG remains concerned at the limited resources available to the NCA to manage these key grassy ecosystem remnants and at the lack of security of conservation tenure of these lands. In 2010 FOG made a number of representation to the federal government seeking removal of potential development zonings over these lands, greater investment in conservation management, targeted removal of exotic trees, and co-management of Yarramundi Reach with the Lindsay Pryor Arboretum. We expect to step up our advocacy for conservation of the grassy ecosystems on national lands in 2011.

| Date | Number of volunteers | | | Number of volunteer hours* | | | Estimated volume of cut material | | |
|----------------|----------------------|----------------|-------------|----------------------------|----------------|-------------|----------------------------------|----------------|-------------|
| | Yarra-mundi Reach | Stirling Ridge | Total | Yarra-mundi Reach | Stirling Ridge | Total | Yarra-mundi Reach | Stirling Ridge | Total |
| 2009 | | | | | | | | | |
| 4-Apr-09 | 30 | 0 | 30 | 107 | 0 | 107 | 20 | 0 | 20 |
| 2-May-09 | 0 | 20 | 20 | 0 | 121 | 121 | 0 | 30 | 30 |
| 19-Sep-09 | 20 | 0 | 20 | 88 | 0 | 88 | 20 | 0 | 20 |
| 17-Oct-09 | 0 | 9 | 9 | 0 | 88 | 88 | 0 | 40 | 40 |
| 5-Dec-09 | 0 | 11 | 11 | 0 | 80 | 80 | 0 | 40 | 40 |
| 28-Dec-09 | 6 | 0 | 6 | 21 | 0 | 21 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Total | 56 | 40 | 96 | 216 | 289 | 505 | 42 | 110 | 152 |
| 2010 | | | | | | | | | |
| 27-Mar-10 | 0 | 12 | 12 | 0 | 93 | 93 | 0 | 40 | 40 |
| 18-May-10 | 0 | 17 | 17 | 0 | 101 | 101 | 0 | 100 | 100 |
| 26-Jun-10 | 0 | 11 | 11 | 0 | 69 | 69 | 0 | 42 | 42 |
| 11-Sep-10 | 16 | 0 | 16 | 104 | 0 | 104 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| 16-Oct-10 | 0 | 14 | 14 | 0 | 98 | 98 | 0 | 45 | 45 |
| 20-Nov-10 | 3 | 8 | 11 | 22 | 50 | 72 | 1 | 45 | 46 |
| Total | 19 | 62 | 81 | 126 | 411 | 537 | 3 | 272 | 275 |
| Average | 9.5 | 12.4 | 13.5 | 63 | 82.2 | 89.5 | 1.5 | 54.4 | 45.8 |
| TOTAL | 75 | 102 | 177 | 342 | 700 | 1042 | 45 | 382 | 427 |

* includes volunteer hours on work record sheets plus one hour per volunteer for lunch and travel

How to Grow Weeds - Jackie Miles

Jackie leading the FOG swamp trip in February 2010.

Over the last twenty years managing my property in Brogo and working as a botanist, I have discovered ten great methods for introducing and spreading weeds. Follow these ten easy steps and you can, like me, guarantee yourself a fairly onerous weed control job for life!

First, weeds love bare ground, so create as much as you can. Pen or hand feed hard-footed livestock in small areas, especially when soil is wet. Overstock your paddocks and just hang in during droughts rather than destocking – it's bound to rain sooner or later and in the meantime you can buy feed in. When controlling weeds, use a non-selective herbicide, or cultivate the ground to create lots of bare areas. Burn piles of fallen timber all over the place. Spray herbicide along fence lines and around buildings to keep the place looking neat.

Second, if hand-feeding livestock, use hay or grain, not pellets, and spread the stuff all over the property. Don't bother checking where it comes from or what weed seed it is likely to include. You are bound to get novel weeds well distributed around your block.

Third, increase soil fertility. We all know Australian soils are mostly pretty poor in nutrients, and richer has to be better, right? And with the odd exception like African lovegrass, most weeds will do so much better with a bit of extra nutrition. It really gives them that crucial edge over the local natives. Apply lots of fertiliser in your house yard and then water like mad so most of it gets carried down-slope into other areas.

Fourth, don't worry about what the local weeds look like or getting unfamiliar plants properly identified. If you don't like the look of something it is bound to be a weed and deserves nuking. On the other hand if it has a pretty flower it is bound to be harmless.

Fifth, garden like there's no tomorrow. Acquire your plants indiscriminately from friends giving away surplus plants (bound to be the weediest species) and charity stalls. Don't bother asking at the nursery about the weed potential of plants. If you like the look of it, just buy it. Buy from mail-order companies that advertise their plants as likely to naturalise freely in your garden. Hell, why not go the whole hog and order seed from overseas on the Internet? Go for nice



weedy mulching products like spoiled hay, in preference to clean ones like sugar cane mulch or rice hulls. It's likely to be heaps cheaper, at least in the short term. Better still, get a load of un-composted manure from your nearest stable or dairy, dig it in and then don't bother removing anything that comes up.

Sixth, extend your gardening out of the house yard and into the bush. It'll look so much prettier with some nice big colourful flowers scattered through it. While you are at it, why not mow your bush too? Mowers and slashers are a great way of spreading weed seed, especially if you mow your weediest areas first, and then head into the bush.

Seventh, dump your garden waste over the fence, or better still, find a nice moist spot for it like a gully.

Eighth, wait till weeds have produced seed before you remove them, and don't bother collecting the seed for safe disposal. In fact why not spread it around a bit? Slash seeding plants, or carry weeds to another area for burning or burying. Or take them to the tip in an uncovered load on your trailer or ute.

Ninth, tackle new infestations on your place on an ad hoc basis. Don't bother doing a thorough search to find out the full extent of the infestation, just hit the plants you find first and hope for the best. You never know, that might be all there are.

Tenth, don't bother controlling weeds that appear on the road verge near your property. It's not your land, so they are not your problem, or not yet, anyway. Someone else will take care of them.

Just kidding folks! If you can avoid doing any or all of these things, it should greatly improve your chances of preventing new infestations and controlling the weeds you already have effectively. It's still going to be a job for life, but hopefully a less onerous one.

For more information on weeds and weed control, see the *Weeds of the South Coast* and *Grow Me Instead* booklets, available from Council or the Southern Rivers CMA, whose websites list other useful books and websites.

Jackie's tips on growing weeds

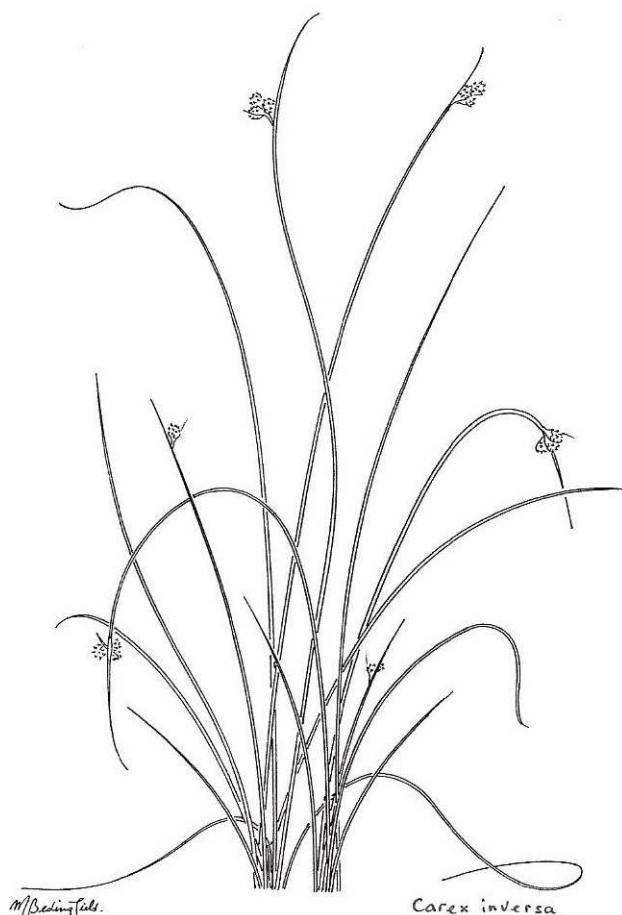
1. Create as much bare ground as possible.
2. Hand-feed hay or grain, not pellets, and spread it around.
3. Increase soil fertility.
4. Don't worry about identifying weeds and unfamiliar plants.
5. Plant pretty plants and acquire plants from your friends.
6. Extend your garden into the bush.
7. Put garden waste over the fence, or moist spots like gullies.
8. Remove weeds after producing seed, and spread seed.
9. Tackle new infestations when the fancy takes you.
10. Don't worry about weeds on road verge near your property.

Knob sedge and short-stem sedge –

Common but inconspicuous amongst the grass by Michael Bedingfield

As the growing season advances in our grassy areas, and the landscape is dominated by slender green leaf blades, some plants are lost in the green meadows. Among the grassy understorey there may be a great variety of different sorts of plants - lilies, daisies, orchids, peas, ferns and various forbs. Some have narrow leaves, or green or small flowers, and they escape notice. Examples are the knob sedge and short-stem sedge, which both have grass-like leaves, and to the untrained eye can blend into the surroundings. Both are difficult to identify unless there are flower-heads or seed-heads present. Their flowers too are very small, and a magnifying glass is required to examine them properly.

The knob sedge is known botanically as *Carex inversa*. It is perennial, and spreads by short, underground rhizomes, and can develop from a small tuft into a dense patch. The preferred habitat is in grasslands and woodlands, in places which have above average moisture levels, or in depressions that are wet in winter. The flower-head consists of two to five, green, oval-shaped flower spikes, 5-10 mm long. These are at the top of a slender stem, with one to several leaf-like bracts growing out from among them. The flower stems are often quite short, only 10 to 15 cm. But in the right situation can grow up to 30 or 40 cm tall, especially if competing with grasses for light. In the drawing I've shown a taller specimen at about one-third of normal size. When growing in this way, they can be quite graceful. This plant is common and widespread in our region, preferring lower altitudes, is widely distributed in NSW and occurs in all states except Northern Territory.



The short-stem sedge has similar looking leaves to the knob sedge and is called *Carex breviculmis*. It too is perennial, spreads by rhizomes, and can create small patches. The flower-head or culm is erect, and is usually shorter than the leaves. Most often it is quite small, only two to five centimetres, and at a maximum would be 10cm tall, and hence the name *breviculmis*. On each culm grow several tiny flower spikes, of which the upper one is the anther-producing male, and the rest are female. With the natural curves of the leaves, the plant is able to achieve some elegance, in its own small way. It grows in grasslands and woodlands, and prefers drier situations. It occurs at all altitudes within the ACT, and is found in all states except WA. The drawing shows it at two-thirds of normal size.



As our eyes become more and more attuned to the variety and detail in our grassy ecosystems, we are rewarded by noticing the previously unseen members of these plant communities. The knob sedge and short-stem sedge are among these.

FOG groups and projects

Activities organises FOG field trips, talks, workshops, on-ground works, support to other groups, property visits, and the FOG calendar. Inquiries: activities2@fog.org.au.

Advocacy prepares submissions and advocates for grassy ecosystem issues. It holds occasional meetings and workshops. Inquiries: advocacy@fog.org.au.

African love grass (ALG) monitoring holds monitoring days at the Bush Heritage property at Scottsdale. Inquiries: linda.spinaze@fog.org.au.

Committee & correspondence The Committee organises, coordinates and monitors FOG activities. Members are Geoff Robertson (Pres.), Isobel Crawford (Vice Pres), Sarah Sharp (Vice Pres.) Al Gabb (Sec.), Sandra Hand (Treas), Kim Pullen (Imm. Past Pres), David Eddy, Naarilla Hirsch, Stephen Horn, Tony Lawson, Margaret Ning and Benjamin Whitworth. Andy Russell is public officer. Inquiries/correspondence: committee@fog.org.au. Postal address: FOG, PO Box 987, Civic Square, ACT 2608.

Communication produces *News of Friends of Grasslands* and *FOG e-Bulletin*. Inquiries: geoff.robertson@fog.org.au (newsletter), and tony.lawson@fog.org.au (e-Bulletin).

Cultivation and Conservation encourages growing of local grasses and wild flowers to learn about their horticulture and ecology, and produces *Cultivation Corner*. Inquiries: janet2.russell@fog.org.au.

FOG ANU Fenner School, with the National Capital Authority, holds regular working bees at Yarramundi Reach (grasslands) and Stirling Ridge (woodlands). Inquiries: jamie.pittock@fog.org.au.

Financial matters, excluding membership, contact sandra.hand@fog.org.au or Sandra on 02 4846 1096.

Grassland Flora FOG is now responsible for sales of *Grassland Flora*. Inquiries: booksales@fog.org.au.

General inquiries Contact info@fog.org.au, Geoff Robertson (6241 4065) or Janet Russell (6251 8949).

Hall Cemetery, with ACT Government, holds regular working bees to protect the Hall leek orchid and generally restore the site. Inquiries: andy.russell@fog.org.au.

Media spokesperson Geoff Robertson (6241 4065). FOG is a regular contributor on Radio Landcare, Tues 9-10am on (2XX, Canberra 98.3FM).

Membership and newsletter despatch See Membership box (page 2). Newsletter despatch is fourth Tuesday of Feb, Apr, June, Aug, Oct. To help, contact margaret.ning@fog.org.au.

Old Cooma Common (OCC) with Cooma Monaro Shire Council manages the OCC Grassland Reserve. Working bees are held twice yearly. Inquiries: margaret.ning@fog.org.au or david.eddy@fog.org.au.

Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park (STEP) FOG helped establish STEP (at Canberra's International Arboretum), a regional botanic gardens and recovery centre to showcase local ecosystems, especially native grasses and forbs. Inquiries: limestone@grapevine.com.au.

Woodland Flora is planning the production of *Woodland Flora*, the sequel of the popular *Grassland Flora*. Inquiries: sarah.sharp@fog.org.au.

Website (www.fog.org.au) full of FOG information, back issues of *News of Friends of Grasslands*, and program details. Inquiries: webmanager@fog.org.au.