



News of Friends of Grasslands

Supporting native grassy ecosystems

November -December 2011

ISSN 1832-6315

Program - take the diary out now

November

WED 2 NOVEMBER, 9.00am- 3.00pm **Grassland**

Monitoring at Scottsdale

Contact linda.spinaze@fog.org.au See page 2 for details.

THURS 3 NOVEMBER, 1.00pm- 4.00pm **Indigenous Values Field Trip to Tuross Falls** Register with Geoff

on 02 6241 4065 or geoff.robertson@fog.org.au .See page 2 for details.

SAT 5 NOVEMBER, 9.30am- 3.00pm **FOG Working Bee, Old Cooma Common** Contact Margaret Ning on

02 6241 4065 or margaret.ning@fog.org.au.See page 2 for details.

SUN 12 NOVEMBER, 2.00pm- 4.00pm **Stirling Ridge Annual Wildflower Walk**

Contact jamie.pittock@fog.org.au for more details and to register.

SUN 13 NOVEMBER, 10.00am start **Fireweed Control at Nunnock Swamp** Contact margaret.ning@fog.org.au

for further details and to register.

SAT 19 NOVEMBER, 9.30am- 3.00pm **FOG Visit to Bunhybee** Register with

linda.spinaze@fog.org.au. Meet at Braidwood bakery at 9:30am. See page 2 for details.

SUN 20 NOVEMBER, 9.00am- 12.00pm & 1.00pm- 4.00pm **FOG/Fenner Working Bee, Stirling Ridge**

Contact jamie.pittock@fog.org.au for more details and to register.

THURS 24 NOVEMBER, 1.00pm- 4.00pm **Indigenous Values Field Trip, Bullocks Flat & Perisher Valley**

Register with Geoff on 02 6241 4065 or

geoff.robertson@fog.org.au .See page 2 for details.

December

It's membership renewal time!

A membership renewal form is enclosed. Please complete it carefully. The form is also on our website.

You may pay by cheque, money order or EFT. It only costs \$20 for families/individuals, \$5 for students/concessions and \$50 for organisations. Donations, while not tax deductible, are very welcome.

Please take the time to complete the survey on FOG activities on the reverse, or email activities@fog.org.au with your feedback to the survey.

Any queries—contact Margaret Ning on 02 6241 4065 or margaret.ning@fog.org.au



SAT 3 - SUN 4 DEC, **Plant ID @Tomneys Plain & Tops, near Tumbarumba** Deadline for registration is 15 Nov. Contact Margaret Ning margaret.ning@fog.org.au or 6241 4065 to register. See page 2 for details.

SAT 10 DECEMBER, 10.00am start **FOG end of year visit to Wimbaliri, Collector** Register with john.fitzgerald@fog.org.au See page 2 for details.

Photos (by L Bond): entries in the Molonglo Catchment Art Prize at the ASOC 2011 Spring Exhibition, (above) "St Mark Protecting the Grasslands" by Marijke Gilchrist, and (below) "Molonglo Grassland" by Rosemary Von Behrens. Go online to see these in colour! More on page 3.



In this issue

Program

News roundup

FOG advocacy

CSE's Recommendations on Lowland Native Grasslands

Coast cemetery weekend

Weeping lovegrass, a local native with a family problem

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.

November

Grassland Monitoring Day, Scottsdale

9:30am – 3:30 pm,
Wed 2 November

Since March 2008, FOG and Bush Heritage Australia have been monitoring the impact of grazing on ALG and the interplay between native grassy vegetation and ALG in sites at Scottsdale where both are present. These are fun days and a great learning opportunity, plus a free lunch. To register contact linda.spinaze@fog.org.au.

Indigenous Values Field Trip to Tuross Falls

1:00 - 4:00 pm, Thurs 3 November
This field trip will be limited to 25 people, with priority given to workshop attendees. To inquire and/or register contact geoff.robertson@fog.org.au or ring Geoff on 02 6241 4065.

FOG Working Bee, Old Cooma Common

9:30am – 3:00 pm,
Sat 5 November

Attending a working bee at Old Cooma Common Grassland Reserve provides an opportunity to visit a good example of one of the most interesting and diverse basalt grasslands 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 tasks not using chemicals.

Enquiries: Margaret Ning - 6241 4065 margaret.ning@fog.org.au.

Stirling Ridge Annual Wildflower Walk

2:00pm - 4:00pm,
Sat 12 November

The Park is home to a diverse array of wildflower species that will be at their peak. Expert ecologists will introduce participants to the flora and fauna of the Park. Information on the meeting place will be available on registration. Contact jamie.pittock@fog.org.au for further details and to register.

Fireweed control, Nunnock Swamp

10:00 am start, Sun 13 November

This activity is in conjunction with NSW Parks and Wildlife on the edges of Nunnock Swamp in the South East Forest National Park between Bombala and Tantawangalo. We'll enjoy the national park, while scanning for the sinister senecio.

Travel and accommodation arrangements are possible. Lunch will be provided. Contact margaret.ning@fog.org.au for further details and to register.

FOG Field Trip to Bunhybee

9:30am – 3:00 pm, Sat 19 November

Bunhybee is a high conservation value property, included in the Kosciuszko to Coast initiative. Nature Conservation Trust sold Bunhybee to Linda Spinaze and Roger Clarke with a Conservation Agreement inscribed on the Title Deed.

Bunhybee will be covered with flowering forbs and shrubs. There will be carpets of *Pultenaea subspicata*, with *Gompholobium minus*, *Asperula conferta* and *Bossiaea* sp., patches of *Lep-torhynchus squamatus*, *Veronica gracilis*, fringed lillies, and *Kunzea parvifolium*, interspersed with sun orchids, *Stylidium graminifolium*, *Diuris*, and more. The rare *Calotis glandulosa* may also be in flower. Naturally, we will see many grasses, including *Austrodonthonia* spp, *Elymus*, *Dichelachne*, *Micro-laena*, *Themeda*, *Themeda*, *Themeda*.....

To get an impression ahead of time, check out:- <http://www.rogerclarke.com/Bunhybee/index.html>

After enjoying the plants on Bunhybee, we will cross to Parlour Grasslands to compare species there. Parlour is now managed by the Canberra Airport Group as an offset for grasslands lost through recent airport taxiway expansion work, and we thank CAG for granting FOG access.

To register or seek further details contact linda.spinaze@fog.org.au. We will meet at Braidwood bakery at 9:30am on the day. Bring water and packed lunch and be ready for some walking.

FOG/Fenner Working Bee, Stirling Ridge

9:00am - 12 noon & 1:00pm -
4:00pm, Sun 20 November

Contact jamie.pittock@fog.org.au for further details and to register

December

Plant ID @Tomneys Plain & Tops, near Tumburrumba

Sat 3- Sun 4 December

FOG will be undertaking further plant identification at these sites following on surveys done in January this year. This work will be led by Dave Mallinson and Margaret Ning and these areas contain some beautiful flora and scenery, montane to sub alpine.

Accommodation (Fri and/or Sat nights) is either camping or possibly some inside at around \$15 per night (still to be arranged), and carpooling will be available. Either way, you will need to bring your own bedding. It will be BYO food and the deadline for registration is 15 Nov. Enquiries/Registration: Margaret Ning (margaret.ning@fog.org.au or 6241 4065).

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.

News Roundup

Upcoming events continued

FOG visit to 'Wimbaliri', Collector

10.00am, Sat 10 December
'Wimbaliri' is 128 ha of bushland containing Silver Ash/Red Stringybark and Black She-oak (*Casuarina littoralis*) forests east of Collector township. The vegetation has influences from the coast, with several species present at the most western edge of their range. There is a high diversity of orchids on the property, very few weeds, lots of birds and wombat holes. There are rock outcrops with views back to Lake George and to the north.

Very informal day, with several possible walks around the bushland. All welcome. Bring food and drink to share for lunch, a barbecue will be available and plenty of tank water. This property belongs to Sarah Sharp and we thank her for offering to share it for the day.

Registration is essential – contact john.fitzgerald@fog.org.au for details about meeting and access and so you can be notified if visit is cancelled at short notice due to wet or fire-ban weather.

Aromatic Peppercross translocation

John Fitz Gerald

SEPT 8, 9 & 13 Details of this restoration project, conceived and led by Rainer Rehwinkel appeared in FOG's July-August 2010 newsletter. Rainer collected seeds from plants which emerged in his new garden at Bungendore and joined the National Recovery Plan for the species, setting out some sites and attempting to re-establish this species 'in the wild' in the Southern Tablelands.

The activities reported last year were extended through three days of well-organised field work by FOG members and other native plant enthusiasts. New seeds were first sorted and cleaned at Rainer's lovely home, then last years' seeding sites were monitored, and finally new sites established.

Monitoring proved to be a bit inconclusive – September dates selected to beat the hot weather of summer proved too early in the 2011 season to allow absolute identification of seedlings. While promising signs were found of 'recruitment', only time will tell.



New sites were established increasing the range of situations into which seeds have been planted. These new plantings included more sites near 2010 locations close to Bungendore at Day's Hill and Brooks Hill Reserves. Importantly, completely new sites were created further afield – both at Scottsdale near Bredbo and in the Royalla Reserve.

I can't wait to see what has emerged by the time FOG returns in twelve months' time.

Dauber Doover Update

Libby Keen

The woody-weed dauber-doovers I received earlier this year are fantastic! I've only just got back into the blackberry thickets along our creek, having fallen into said creek back in February while encumbered with spray bottles of poison and done some damage to myself (but not to the creek, I managed to hold the poison up out of the water!).

Now it's so easy to carry the gear and to dab cut stems without any collateral damage, even when blackberry is growing right up through dense ferns. Much quicker and safer too. The doovers seem quite robust, I'm still on the first sponge tip and it stays firmly in place. We will keep using them and singing their praises.

We haven't had time to assess the results of what we did last week, but are checking out what we did over last summer. A year ago we started cutting and dabbing the main stems of the huge sprays growing along the creek gully where it's very rocky and cliffy. This meant lots of scrambling, leaning over into crevices, wading and rock-hopping.

Those big stems and side-stems have died right down over this winter but there is now quite a lot of fiddly regrowth coming which we are working through with the doovers. We may have got the strength of poison wrong for dabbing - I diluted the Roundup last year but now we're using it neat. I've found it's essential to colour the poison. And we're using some really good poison/prickle-proof gloves we got at Braidwood Rural.

We do feel we're winning but it'll probably take a few more seasons to kill the root-systems.

What's satisfying is that the gully quickly transformed itself, as ferns, grasses, forbs, lomatias etc all rushed up into the light (nettles and solanum too, but we can pull those up). So no bare patches at all.

Photo: (above) A new site on Day's Hill Reserve, overlooking Bungendore, being prepared and planted with seeds of *Lepidium hyssopifolium*. The leader of the project, Rainer Rehwinkel, is on the left of these four workers seen staking out the ground (L Schweikle).

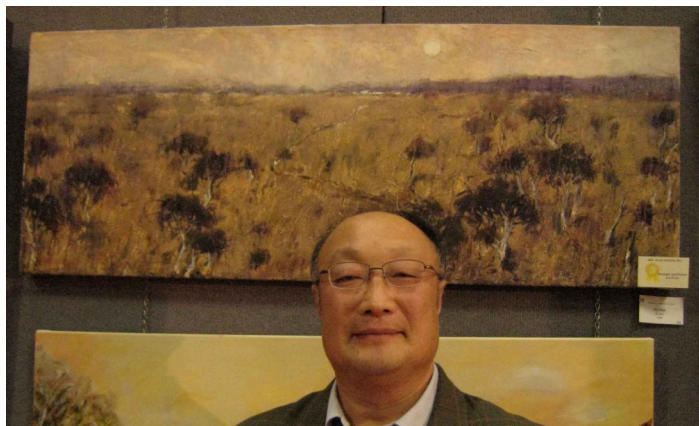
Artists Focus on Grasslands

Geoff Robertson and Margaret Ning

9 SEPT John Fitz Gerald, Geoff Robertson and Margaret Ning attended the Artists Society of Canberra's (ASOC) 2011 Spring Exhibition as official guests. FOG received invitations because it donated and awarded the third prize. This was awarded at the Opening night to An Pan for "Sun Rise" in the Molonglo Catchment Art Prize, *Along the Molonglo* Section. This was the seventh year the Molonglo Catchment Group (MCG) had participated in the exhibition, but the first time they had a specific sub-theme, - 'The Untold Riches of our Native Grasslands', hence FOG's involvement. MCG's Tom Baker, whose name has appeared many times in our newsletter, did much of the legwork and organizing. The result was that many artists came to focus on our most threatened ecosystem and its flora and fauna. Entries for the *Along the Molonglo* section were up by 25% this year.

The \$2,000 for the Molonglo Catchment Art Prize, won by Sandra House, was donated by ACTEW Corporation and second prize of \$500, won by Carolyn Lawrence, was donated by the Molonglo Catchment Group.

The works submitted were very varied. In looking at them, while sipping wine and eating some of the refreshments provided by the ASOC organisers, I was struck and sometimes bemused by the way many artists saw our grasslands. Different artists took different focuses. Many took a flora and or fauna theme, capturing great images of some of the superb flowers and cryptic and not so cryptic critters. However, those



who tried to capture the grasses and/or grassland landscapes had a much more difficult task, because painting such images is a relatively new phenomenon and there are no tried and accepted ways of doing this. Some showed great success.

Some artists looking for structure in our grasslands, did wonderful paintings which showed verbascum stalks as an almost dominant life form. Apparently the most striking element of grasslands for many artists, and observers more generally, are the weeds. Weeds managers beware; I think it is very sad that some people felt the need to deliberately focus on the issue of weeds in grasslands.

I was impressed by the President of ASOC, Tim Hardy, who reflected on the many years of effort, enthusi-

asm, and passion that goes into building community groups, irrespective of the field of endeavour. Guest speaker, Greg Bayliss from the ABC, talked of the importance of community engagement and the importance of groups like ASOC in promoting the type of society that makes Australia, and Canberra in particular, such a pleasing place to live in. One of the judges, Julie Bradley, spoke about the quality of the works and the criteria she and the other judge (Bernard Hardy) had used. All mentioned their delight at the inclusion of the Grassland theme and the importance of combining art and the environment.

John Fitz Gerald, FOG President, was asked to talk about grasslands, FOG and the grassland exhibition. He said that FOG, which has over 200 members, felt delighted

and privileged to be donating and awarding third prize. Grasslands were a key concern of FOG and it was great that ASOC and MCG had taken the initiative in having this focus on grasslands. John said he was very impressed with the number and quality of the entries that had captured the many varied images of grasslands. He also said it was very interesting to see grasslands through the eyes of artists.

There were many wonderful paintings in various mediums and themes, showing the many and varied talents of local artists.

ASOC's web address is <http://www.asoc.net.au/>



Photos: Prize winning entries in the Molonglo Catchment Art Prize (top) 2nd prize "Grasslands" by Carolyn Lawrence and (bottom) 1st prize "Molonglo Grassland Triptych" by Sandra House (L Bond), (middle) 3rd prize "Sun Rise" by An Pan (J FitzGerald)

Blitz on national capital grasslands

Jamie Pittock

September proved a busy month for restoration of the grasslands on national capital lands at Yarramundi Reach and Stirling Park.

In a further, welcome sign of progress the National Capital Authority consulted FOG and undertook a control burn of the southern-most sixth of the Yarramundi Reach grasslands. FOG supports well-planned, scientifically based patch burning of native grasslands as an important measure to reduce grass biomass from time to time to enable other grassland flora space to thrive between the tussocks.

SEPT 17 On Saturday six FOG volunteers were joined by 14 National Student Leadership Forum volunteers who were undertaking community service during their annual conference of young leaders from different religious faiths. At the direction of Jamie Pittock and Margaret Ning, this enthusiastic group helped clear woody weeds from a corridor across the southern end of Stirling Ridge in order to protect a large button wrinklewort population and prepare for a control burn planned in the area in the coming nine months. Woody weeds around an Aboriginal scar tree were also removed under John Fitzgerald's supervision. Geoff Robertson took the opportunity of

the control burn in June to spray out some resprouting weeds and broom seedlings.

In follow up work, Jamie Pittock and John Fitzgerald observed that one of the first broom infestations tackled by FOG in 2009 has not resprouted and that most of the shrubs and trees planted in The Gap are growing well. The few woody weeds and blackberry that were missed by previous work parties were quickly despatched.

SEPT 18 At Yarramundi Reach on Sunday a large team of 23 volunteers planted 720 seedlings into areas previously infested with Chilean needle grass. In our ongoing attempt to find a formula to restore indigenous grassland species to disturbed areas, a mix of *Poa*, *Themeda*, *Bothriochloa*, *Vittadinia*, and *Chrysocephalum* were planted in the hope that they will be tough enough to cope with the exposed location and competition from weeds.

Efforts were also directed at control of blackberry after a disappointing resurgence of the weed after our wet year. The additional blackberry infestations highlighted the cost of not wiping out this weed earlier with a more concerted spraying program. Evidence of a major St John's wort infestation is also of great concern. Pleasingly the wild oats infestation appeared less vigorous through the dense *Themeda* stands compared to drier times, however warmer weather may see it thrive once more.

Some 180 seedlings were left over from this work party, and subsequent efforts by John Fitzgerald and Sarah Sharp and the incipient, new ACT National Green Jobs Corps Team saw 80 more planted at Yarramundi Reach and Stirling Park in the first week of October.

Photos: (below) NCA and Rural Bushfire Brigade volunteers burn a portion of the Yarramundi Reach grassland (J Pittock), and (below left) National Student Leadership Forum volunteers help restore the Stirling Park grassy woodlands (G Robertson)



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 (margaret.ning@fog.org.au) with your e-mail address. Also, please let Margaret know of address changes.

FOG advocacy

Naarilla Hirsch

August 2011

The ACT Land Development Agency (LDA) asked for community feedback on its Lawson Master Plan and Draft Estate Development Plan. FOG is pleased about the proposed buffer outside the conservation area, and supports cat containment within Lawson. FOG understands that the LDA is aware of the importance of the nearby endangered Ginninderra peppercreep, and asked that it is kept in mind when plantings occur in open space areas. We would also like to see a long term monitoring program adopted to inform the management of open space areas in the suburb.

September 2011

The ACT Government released a Volunteer Statement for public comment. FOG supports this statement in general, and added some further thoughts on volunteering. These included the rewards volunteering brings, such as learning a new range of knowledge and skills, mental and physical exercise, and developing a network of friends. FOG raised the issue of training of volunteers, especially in smaller organisations, which relates to health and safety, governance issues, fundraising and financial management, and saw Government as having a role to play in assisting community groups to build their skills infrastructure and training. The costs and tasks involved in employing staff and/or engaging contractors present a significant barrier to many groups taking this step, which discriminates in favour of well established groups. FOG was also pleased to see that a Volunteering for the Environment Strategy is being developed.

The ACT's Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate asked for public comment on its

Draft ACT Pest Animal Management Strategy. In general, FOG supports this document, particularly its recognition of the negative impact of pest animals such as rabbits on grassy ecosystems and approaches to deal with them. The draft strategy offers a way to use the limited resources available for pest management more effectively. While FOG sees the strategy as very important, it also considers that there needs to be some commitment from Government and land managers to provide sufficient resources over the long term to reduce the impact of pest animals on high quality conservation areas.

In response to the review of the Livestock Health and Pest Authorities, FOG believes the future of travelling stock reserves (TSRs) is an important issue for the review to consider as they play an important role in conserving grassy ecosystems. TSRs also create connectivity and habitat corridors across the landscape, forming a network that connects with stock routes and corridors in other states. Because of the public benefit of TSRs with high conservation value, FOG believes that the management of these should be funded by public monies and managed by a single, well-funded agency with proven rural land management expertise and on-ground staff. Proper management plans based on sound conservation objectives need to be developed and to be adequately and continuously resourced.

FOG responded to a proposal submitted under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation 1999 (EPBC Act) concerning the development of residential areas in Moncrieff. FOG opposes further development or finalisation of development planning in Belconnen and Gungahlin that impacts on endangered and vulnerable grassy ecosystems and species until a strategic review is undertaken (with opportunity for public input) This would allow the best approach to conserving these ecosystems and species into the future to be determined and put into practice.

FOG also raised connectivity issues, the question of location of buffer zones, and the need for an integrated approach to offset proposals (given that other developments are planned for the Belconnen and Gungahlin areas). Of the options presented, FOG sees the developer's preferred option as the least desirable, as it results in the least retention of grassy ecosystems.

The full text of FOG submissions appears on our website.



Photo: (above) Grassland Treasures by Vivien Pinder (L Bond)

Helping the FOG Committee

Many hands make light work. A healthy organisation is undoubtedly one in which some new faces periodically move into different parts of the structure - this could be your chance to contribute to FOG's good health?

Committee tasks are not onerous - the group meets just six times each year, on the fourth Tuesday of each second month. Meetings are at 5:30 in the afternoon for a maximum of two hours in the Conservation Council ACT office at 17 Childers Street in Canberra City.

In particular, the committee would greatly value some extra secretarial help, especially in the form of a secretary to take and draft meeting minutes, also possibly meeting agendas. If you have either interest or skills that fit the description, please contact president@fog.org.au - any approaches will be greatly welcomed.

What has happened to the CSE's Report on ACT Lowland Native Grassland Investigation Recommendations?

Sarah Sharp and Naarilla Hirsch



In March 2009 the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment (CSE) provided to the ACT Government her Report on ACT Lowland Native Grassland Investigation, containing 32 recommendations concerning the ACT's grasslands. A year later, Mr Simon Corbell, the Minister for the Environment, Climate Change and Water presented the Government's response to the Legislative Assembly. Two years down the track, we take a look at progress using information from the 2009-10 annual report of the Office of the CSE, which gives a summary of progress on each of the recommendations to September 2010, the Grassland Forum held in May 2010, activities undertaken by FOG and specific inquiries to ACT Government for clarification. The CSE's 32 recommendations can be found at <http://www.environmentcommissioner.act.gov.au/investigations/investigation>.

There has been some progress in implementation. For example, the Environmental Weed Report for 2009-2010 for ACT indicates reduced cover by the higher priority weed species in targeted high conservation value areas. Specifically, weed control has been reported for Jarramlee, Dunlop Grassland, West Jerrabomberra, Majura West and Umbagog Park (recommendation 21). At Yarramundi Reach (and Stirling Ridge) weed control is being undertaken, primarily by the FOG/Fenner working group, although there is far more to be done.

There has been a reduction in the threatening process of grazing (recommendation 21) by reducing kangaroo numbers on some reserves (West Jerrabomberra Grasslands, Belconnen Naval Station) – see the ACT Kangaroo Management Plan 2010 available on the ACT Government website. In addition, a 2011 program recently involved five other nature reserves.

Monitoring (recommendation 17) has been established at a number of grassland sites by the ACT Government. This monitoring includes estimates of cover of native grasses, introduced species, litter and bare ground, total native and introduced species richness, scores for indicator species and an overall grassland flora diversity score. While monitoring is limited by resource constraints, some is done in conjunction with organisations such as the University of Canberra (e.g. monitoring Grassland Earless Dragon), and some is mandated through urban-development planning.

The first annual community and stakeholder lowland native grassland forum (recommendation 30) was conducted last May by the Office of the CSE, in partnership with FOG, TaMS and the ACT Natural Resource Management Council. A report on the forum appears at http://www.envcomm.act.gov.au/publications/special_reports_and_investigations.

Current and future ACT Government research, cited at the forum includes:

- Impacts of kangaroo grazing on grassy ecosystems;
- Feasibility of captive breeding of Grassland Earless Dragon;
- Influence of habitat structure on Grassland Earless Dragon;
- Translocation methods for Golden Sun Moth;
- Habitat restoration for Golden Sun Moth;
- Methods for the introduction of Button Wrinklewort into Nature Reserves;
- Establishing a new population of Ginninderra Peppercress; and

-Mapping the distribution of NTG in Namadgi NP.

The ACT Government has implemented a specific mowing regime (recommendation 20) for some high quality native grassland sites such as Umbagog Park South and sites in Yarralumla.

Other recommendations have not progressed so well. In relation to the memoranda of understanding (MOUs) between the ACT Government and other organisations responsible for ACT grassland sites (recommendations 6, 7 and 8), the ACT Government does not support MOUs and proposes alternative consultative mechanisms. The Department of Defence is of the view that introduction of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999* has addressed the issues covered by the previous MOUs. We have some concerns about this, since the EPBC process is intended to cover new development proposals. Our view is that there needs to be some mechanism to ensure regular and effective communication.

Other recommendations are, we understand, being actioned slowly, for example through the reviews of the ACT Nature Conservation Act and of Canberra Nature Park (recommendations 1, 3, 5 and 9).

Another serious concern is the lack of progress on recommendation 22, which calls for a strategic approach to protecting Natural Temperate Grassland and threatened grassland species, as well as reserving (if appropriate) the highest quality sites and developing an offset policy. Some progress has been made on this, one example being the support of the ACT Government and ACT Conservator of Flora and Fauna for part of the Belconnen Naval Transmission Station to become an ACT conservation reserve. A number of other grassland sites will be considered in the context of the Eastern Broadacre and Kowen planning process. However, while it appears that the ACT Government has drafted an offset policy, it has not been publicly released, and no strategic approach has emerged in recent development proposals involving grassy ecosystems hosting the Golden Sun Moth, as an example.

Finally, our major concern is that recommendation 28 (for land management to ensure that grasslands sites in good condition (40%) are maintained, and those approaching or in a critical condition (60%) are restored) still needs considerable action, despite two years having passed since the CSE's Report. In response we issue a call to redetermine conditions of grasslands using the criteria applied previously. Perhaps FOG could play some part in resurveying.



Photos: (above) Naarilla, Sarah and Tony at St Marks, and 2 endangered grassland dwellers, (below), the Grassland Earless Dragon, and (bottom) the Golden Sun Moth. Previous page, a FOG visit to Gungahlin grassland. (G Robertson) On opposite page "Changing Face of Grasslands" by Dagmara Anders (L Bond).



Newsletter available electronically

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

NATIVE PASTURE MANAGEMENT

Margaret Ning

Recently FOG received a parcel of 60 booklets titled "Native Pasture Management", which was published by Victorian DPI in July 2011. The brochure is 16 pages, and is intended as an additional resource and information tool for agency extension staff, natural resource management staff, and landholders interested in managing native pastures/grasses for production and biodiversity.

According to the covering letter, eight years of research on Western Victorian steep hills by DPI researchers in Hamilton, has resulted in a guide for farmers aiming to make the most of native grasses which have prevailed on the sometimes seemingly barren hills. The information in the booklet can be implemented on farm with potential production and biodiversity benefits, backed by solid research.

Other information in the covering letter explained that native and introduced grass productivity and persistence depend on grazing strategies, fertiliser management and weed and pest control. Deferred grazing is designed to match grazing timing or resting to pasture plants' growth stage, and involves resting a paddock for a few weeks to a few months in the spring, summer to autumn period to allow for perennial pasture seed production and recruitment. There are several types of deferred grazing which can be used to achieve different management targets.

Also mentioned is that it is estimated that native pastures cover 1.7m ha, or 13%, of the agricultural land in Victoria. There are opportunities to increase profitability of production of sheep, and improve environmental health on less arable high rainfall and recharge zones. The key to good management of land in these zones is to maintain water balance, reduce erosion, salinity and protect biodiversity.

Chapter topics in the booklet include:

- Native grasses and native pastures
- Strategies to manage and rejuvenate native pastures
- Types of deferred grazing strategies
- Practical implementation
- Managing onion grass and broadleaf weeds
- Managing water runoff
- Managing for biodiversity
- Deferred grazing quick reference guide.

Further reading includes lots of familiar names and grassland publications/field guides.

FOG is inviting members who would like a copy of the booklet to get in touch, and we shall send you out a copy. We shall also take copies to this season's activities for distribution to anyone who is interested

Contact Margaret on 02 6241 4065 or margaret.ning@fog.org.au.



Photos: (above) "Changing Face of Grasslands" by Dagmara Anders, and (below) "Summer Grass Coleman Ridge" by Reg Park (L Bond).



2012 FOG Membership

Join or renew— renewals due by 1 January

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 membership@fog.org.au

Outcomes from the TSR conference held in Orange in July can be found at the (very long) following web address http://www.npansw.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=728:the-2011-nsw-travelling-stock-routes-and-reserves-conference&catid=101:travelling-stock-routes&Itemid=461, or for those who do not get the electronic newsletter (yes, there are some benefits!), you can navigate there from www.npansw.org.au (search for TSR conference).

FOG COASTAL CEMETERIES VISIT-

Margaret Ning



In years gone by, FOG has visited the coast in August or September as it is an opportunity to see an early spring flowering and to catch up with FOG members down that way. The gloomy weather forecast made us consider cancelling the trip, but fortunately wise counsel prevailed and we went ahead, and while the weather was cool, the rain held off and we had two great days. Botanists Jackie Miles and Paul McPherson were our leaders on day one and day two respectively.

Our meeting place on the Saturday was a few kilometres south of Eden, and here the Canberra contingent (Geoff, Naarilla, Andrew and I) met up with the coastal members (Jackie, Max, Bernadette, Richard and Mark), making a keen group of nine. The meeting place was also our first site, and after applying some tick spray, we crossed the highway to visit a hazard reduction burnt area from a couple of years ago. Within a woodland/forest that included *Eucalyptus sieberi*, *Banksia serrata*, *B. spinulosa*, and *Allocasuarina littoralis* (some of the latter, but not all, were resprouting, which this species is not supposed to do after fire, indicating a pretty cool burn), we were treated to a tremendous flower display and were able to compare burnt and unburnt areas. The burnt area was more striking as the orchids and the other smaller herbs were not so overwhelmed by the larger shrubs. Some of the many flowering species included *Caladenia picta* (or *catenata*), *C. carnea*, *Diuris maculata* complex, *Kennedia prostrata*, *Lobelia gibbosa*, *Patersonia sericea* and possibly *P. glabrata*, two *Opercularia* species side by side, *Tetratheca pilosa* ssp. *latifolia*, *Drosera auriculata*, a *Poranthera* species I had not seen before (probably *P. ericifolia*), and a handful of yellow and orange pea species. A pre-flowering blood lily (*Haemodorum corymbosum*) caused some excitement and a skink was our first and possibly only reptile sighting of the day.

Next, after a longish drive through part of Ben Boyd National Park, we arrived at the Saltwater Creek camping area where we had lunch. The plant discussions and social catch up continued and it was great to hear from Bernadette and Richard on their new life in Bega and to discover what Mark was doing in promoting the horticulture of local small indigenous plants. Andrew tracked down birds to photograph.

After lunch we went on a fantastic return walk of around five kilometres through coastal heath which also had been accidentally burnt within the last two years. The fire had removed the taller vegetation to allow a much better view of the whole area, with the amazing coastline beyond the vegetation. A wide range of plants were flowering: including constant sightings of *Patersonia* spp. (dubbed 'fleur du jour' by some), *Pimelea linifolia*, both *Glossodia minor* (a post-fire flowerer) and *G. major*, blunt everlasting (*Argentipallium obtusifolium*); smatterings of *Hybanthus vernonii* and *Coronidium scorpioides*; isolated plants of *Leptorhynchus nitidulus*, *Scaevola ramosissima*, a spotted, almost cobalt blue spotted *Thelymitra* species, *Schelhammra undulata*; two plants of *Euphrasia collina*; and solo specimens of a pink *Thelymitra* species, *Thelionema umbellatum*, and *Hypoxis hygrometrica*. The very regal *Coronidium elatum* was seen in the *Melaleuca* scrub in between stretches of heath.

As usual, people showed great interest in exchanging information on the plants and Jackie explained some of the recent taxonomic revisions, including for *Viola hederacea*, and pointed out some species that were on the edges of their natural range, including *Xanthosia tasmanica* and the endangered *Viola cleistogamoides*. Our heath bird highlight for the day was a tawny-crowned honeyeater.

continued...

Our final stop for the day, also still within Ben Boyd National Park, contained an interesting mix of five white species: coneseeds (*Conospermum taxifolium*), a *Leptospermum* species, wedding bush (*Ricinocarpos pinifolius*), a *Leucopogon* species, and *Epacris impressa*. Colour at the spot was provided by a mauve *Comesperma* species, yellow *Leionema diosmeum* and yellow *Aotus ericoides*. The final discussion for the day was about the cluster of *Corybas* leaves at the site, one of which was 7cm long!!!

A handful of us stayed overnight in the Eden Tourist Park and went out for dinner in town.

On the following day, minus a few from Saturday and joined by Christine and Roger and our leader, Paul, eight of us experienced a day of completely different landscapes and vegetation to the day before. Essentially we travelled to three cemeteries in different coastal valleys to explore their secondary grasslands; each cemetery remains an isolated kangaroo grassland remnant within a totally modified landscape. Each site was sprinkled with various forbs, but weeds were an issue at each site and often the kangaroo grass thatch could have done with better management.

Our Sunday meeting place was the Towamba River bridge at Towamba, which still showed signs of the huge rain event that hit the area in March this year. An estimated ten inches fell very quickly, and swept all before it; we were shown a bus shelter that had been totally submerged by the flows. While we were gazing at the aftermath of all that drama, Paul gave us some background for the day and showed us the management plan that he had developed for Towamba Cemetery. (http://thebegavalley.org.au/uploads/media/2011Towamba_Cemetery_vegetation_report.pdf - this is well worth browsing on the web) Before entering any of Sunday's cemeteries, and also on departure from them, we stepped in and out of a tray of

Phytoclean, a new disinfectant cleaner specially designed for the control of *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, in an attempt to not traipse any diseases on to the sites.

Towamba Cemetery was our first destination. It was a very interesting site with open Themeda areas, including a small bog, as well as woodland areas and a dam. The site had been burnt a couple of years earlier, and there were signs of kangaroos and wombats so the vegetation was being removed 'naturally' as well.

The little bog area contained a small number of species one would expect to see there, *Drosera peltata*, *Isolepis* sp., *Centella asiatica*, *Schoenus apogon*, *Juncus planifolia*, *Hypericum japonicum*, but with the added bonus of pipe wort (*Eriocaulon scariosum*), a small sedge we don't often see. We were also told that *Fimbristylus dichotoma*, another not very common wettish area rush, had also been recorded within and around the bog area.

While the inland cemetery sites were nowhere near as advanced with their flowering as the coastal heath we saw the previous day, we were still treated to flowering examples of *Diuris chryseopsis*, *Ranunculus lappaceus*, *Bulbine glauca*, *Xerochrysum bracteatum*, *Clematis glycinoides*, *Ajuga australis*, *Viola hederacea*, *Leucopogon juniperinus*, *Hovea heterophylla*, *Cryptandra amara* var. *amara*, *Oxalis perennans* and others. Significant species at the site which were not yet flowering included brittle greenhood (*Pterostylis truncata*), blue rice flower (*Pimelea glauca*), curved rice flower (*Pimelea curviflora* var. *sericea*), wire lily (*Laxmannia gracilis*), slender onion orchid (*Microtis parviflora*), bundled knawel (*Scleranthus fasciculatus*), native sorghum (*Sorghum leiocladum*), creamy candles (*Stackhousia monogyna*), yellow rush lily (*Tricoryne elatior*) and Tadgell's bluebell (*Wahlenbergia multicaulis*).

Photo: (below) FOG members relaxing on Sunday's cemetery visit (M Adams)



The wooded areas of the cemetery consisted of *Eucalyptus elata*, *Acacia implexa*, *A. mearnsii*, and kurrajong (*Brachychiton populneus*), which were successfully recruiting. *Acacia implexa* was moving out into the grassland area and posing a bit of a management issue, and other management issues included the escape of some plantings (native to the Bega Valley, but not to the Towamba site), some blackberry, a lot of sweet vernal grass, and some of the invasive noxious fireweed (*Senecio madagascariensis*) which we pulled and removed.

We then headed off on the 40 minute drive to Wyndham cemetery, stopping briefly to view a yellow bellied glider feeding tree in the best example of Bega wet scrub forest in the area. It was already lunch time, and the local store/cafe was an excellent source of tucker and coffee. The Wyndham cemetery was also dominated by a thick sward of Themeda, which had recently been partially mowed. As we wandered around we once again made ourselves useful by pulling any of the fireweed that we came across, ultimately removing a large bag of it from the site. While there was only a handful of flowering species, we still compiled a sizable list of plants for the site.

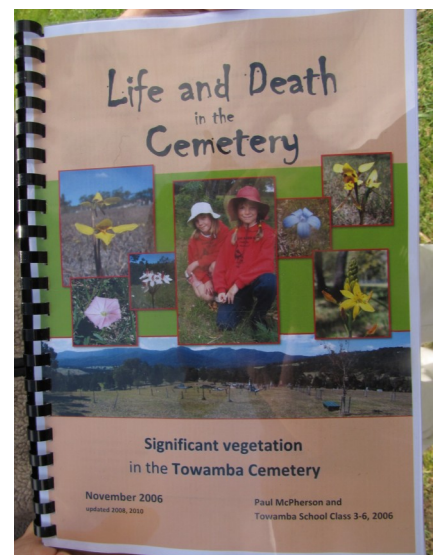
Rocky Hall Cemetery wasn't far away and we were welcomed by a couple of playful willie wagtails. It was a slightly elevated site, with interesting surroundings, including a couple of snow gum (*Eucalyptus pauciflora*) within it, ribbon gum (*E. viminalis*) close by, and some yellow box (*E. melliodora*) no more than three kilometres away. The Themeda sward, some of which had been recently mown, was reasonably thick and seemed to be resisting the fireweed invasion slightly better than at the Wyndham cemetery, although a reasonable amount of the plant was collected and removed from the site.

This site contained a large population of smooth rice flower (*Pimelea glauca*), which was at its peak flowering. Some other species in flower included *Stackhousia monogyna*, *Bossiaea buxifolia*, *Ranunculus lappaceus*, *Pimelea linifolia*, a nice display of *Craspedia variabilis*, *Oxalis perennans* and *Asperula conferta*. Also at the site, but as yet unflowering was the red flowering form of *Pimelea curviflora* var *sericea*. The Themeda was so thick that we decided to tease it apart in places, in an attempt to find more native species. We were quite successful, and 'unearthed' *Carex breviculmis*, more *Bossiaea buxifolia*, *Convolvulus erubescens*, *Epilobium* sp., and *Poa sieberiana*, but there was no sign of the *Zornia dyctiocarpa* which had been recorded at the site previously.

ID hints from Paul in the course of the day included: how to tell *Acaena ovina* from *A. agnipila*, which is easy if one has old fruits, as the even length of the spines on the fruit makes it the latter; how to distinguish *Pimelea linifolia* from *P. glauca* which was simply a matter of checking whether the inner bracts have hairy margins for it to be the latter; how to distinguish *Craspedia variabilis* from *C. canens*, the latter is less common with fewer and smaller glandular hairs. The former has long multiseptate hairs on the lower stem which are visible with a hand lens.

We wish to express our special appreciation to Jackie and Paul for their commitment to our endangered grassy ecosystems and for sharing their special places with us.

Photos: (below) Paul's publication on the Towamba Cemetery, and (below left) Patersonia, the "fleur de jour" on Saturday (G Robertson).



Weeping lovegrass - one of our local native lovegrasses with a family problem

Michael Bedingfield

The botanical name for weeping lovegrass is *Eragrostis parviflora*. *Eragrostis* means “lovely grass”, which is fitting because this is quite an attractive grass. The common name adds more clarity. It has a weeping or drooping habit in the growth of the flower-head, especially when not mature. As time passes, and the flower-head becomes a seed-head, it is more open and erect. The branches of the seed-head of all local lovegrass species are very fine and spreading. The spikelets, which contain the tiny seeds, occur at the tips of these fine branches. A drawing of a typical *Eragrostis* spikelet is shown enlarged, and for weeping lovegrass, they are 5 to 10 mm long. The local native lovegrasses are annuals or short-lived perennials, with a small to medium tuft of bright green leaves. When they have dried out they wither and disappear. They respond well to summer rain, and only grow when there is sufficient soil moisture. There are about six species of native lovegrasses that occur the region. These include our main subject, as well as Brown’s lovegrass, (*E. brownii*), and rough-grain lovegrass, (*E. trachycarpa*).

Unfortunately, in our area, when you mention the word “lovegrass” the most familiar association is with African lovegrass (ALG), *E. curvula*. ALG is an exotic, undesirable, highly invasive weed that has gained a disastrous hold in local grassy areas. It is native to southern Africa, and

has become naturalized in a number of countries throughout the world. It is believed to have been introduced to Australia by accident before 1900, mixed with other pasture seeds. However, intentional imports have been made since then, and it was distributed commercially. It is a highly variable species, and has been grown primarily for erosion control and as stock fodder. But it has spread rapidly and has become a major problem in our region, for farmers and for our native grassy ecosystems. Sheep and cattle will eat the local variety, but prefer the native grasses and other more palatable exotic grasses. Kangaroos also find it distasteful. This gives ALG an enormous competitive advantage. It does particularly well in drier areas, on poor soils, and is drought tolerant.

It is easy to distinguish ALG from the native lovegrasses, with their soft, bright green foliage, small size, and short life span. In contrast, ALG is a tough perennial, with a large, firmly rooted tussock, and coarse grey-green foliage. The tussocks remain in place after browning off. In places left ungrazed, this has created a dense ground cover over large areas all year round. Plants grow up to a metre or more tall, and the leaf tips are curly, especially as the leaves age and dry out. The seed-heads have a similar form to the natives, but after shedding seed they remain standing through the cooler months. In the ACT ALG has been firmly established as a dominant grassy groundcover along the Murrumbidgee River corridor for some time, and in recent years has spread into Canberra to become a major weed there too, in both urban parkland and lawns. It is a declared noxious weed for our region.

The native lovegrasses are quite the opposite to ALG, and are enjoyed by stock too. Weeping lovegrass is distributed widely in southern and eastern Australia, occurring in a variety of habitats. The framed drawing shows it at about one quarter of normal size. The native lovegrasses are quite good-looking, and the weeping lovegrass is especially graceful.



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: activities@fog.org.au.

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

Committee & correspondence The Committee organises, coordinates and monitors FOG activities. Members are John Fitz Gerald (Pres.), Isobel Crawford (Vice Pres), Sarah Sharp (Vice Pres.) Al Gabb (Sec.), Sandra Hand (Treas), Kim Pullen, David Eddy, Naarilla Hirsch, Stephen Horn, Tony Lawson, Margaret Ning, Benjamin Whitworth and Evelyn Chia. Andy Russell is public officer.

Inquiries/correspondence: committee2@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: heather.sweet@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, Janet Russell (6251 8949).

Grassland monitoring, Scottsdale holds monitoring days at the Bush Heritage property at Scottsdale. Inquiries: linda.spinaze@fog.org.au.

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 Sarah Sharp (0402 576 412) sarah.sharp@fog.org.au .

FOG is a regular contributor on Radio Landcare, Tues 9-10am on (2XX, Canberra 98.3FM).

Membership and newsletter despatch See Membership box (page 9). Newsletter despatch is fourth Tuesday of Feb, Apr, June, Aug, Oct. To help, contact membership@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 *Woodland Flora*, the sequel to the popular *Grassland Flora*, is now at advanced production stage. 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.