



News of Friends of Grasslands

Supporting native grassy ecosystems

May-June 2012

ISSN 1832-6315

Program - take the diary out now

May

SUN 6 MAY, 9:00am–4:00pm, **FOG/Fenner Working Bee, Stirling Ridge** Contact jamie.pittock@fog.org.au for further details and to register. Details page 2.

SAT 12 MAY, 9:00am–12noon, **FOG Hall Cemetery Working Bee** Contact Andy on 6251 8949 or at andy.russell@fog.org.au Details page 2.

In this issue

Program

News roundup

Cultivation corner

FOG advocacy

2011 reports

Tomney's Plain; A Wetland Restoration Project

Australian anchor plant, A special but thorny subject

Photo: (right) by Rainer Rehwinkel shows riparian and dry forest plant communities adjacent to the Murrumbidgee River, Scottsdale Reserve (Bush Heritage Australia). News item on Plant Communities of the upper Murrumbidgee catchment on page 6. Swamp foxtail by John Fitz Gerald (below) should be planted with caution. See story on page 3.



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 membership@fog.org.au

Newsletter available electronically

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

Upcoming FOG Events

News Roundup

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.

FOG/Fenner Working Bee, Stirling Ridge

9:00am–12noon & 1:00–4:00pm,
Sun 6 May

We will continue the work to dispatch woody weed infestations in Stirling Park. Come along to help in our efforts to clear out weedy invaders from key button wrinklewort habitat. FOG is now working with local residents to further enhance the restoration of its ecologically significant grassy woodlands and support other management. If you are interested in being involved, please contact Jamie at jamie.pittock@fog.org.au for further details and to register.

FOG Hall Cemetery Working Bee, Wallaroo Rd, Hall

9:00am–12noon,
Sat 12 May

Andy Russell is looking for assistance at the Hall Cemetery Working Bee. If you can help, please contact Andy on 6251 8949 or at andy.russell@fog.org.au. Morning tea will be supplied.

Stirling Park update

Jamie Pittock

FEB 21 FOG really appreciated the interest and enthusiasm shown by the 32 people who participated in the meeting for better management of Stirling Park. The meeting heard of the values of the Park, the vital role local residents can play in helping to maintain the area and FOG's desire to see more frequent volunteer work in the Park.

A great many local residents expressed interest in participating in voluntary work to restore the grassy woodland ecosystem of the Park. FOG undertook to invite those interested to participate in scheduled work parties, and to plan regular Saturday morning work parties on a monthly basis in the second half of the year that are better suited to participation from local residents. FOG will also look to start work on parts of the Park most used by local residents. Common activities include weeding, revegetation and rubbish removal.

The NCA Chief Executive, Mr Gary Rake, updated the meeting on current issues. Residents were invited to participate in the evaluation of proposed embassy sites. The Authority has proposed to consolidate some

land use zones in the Park, particularly the disused road reserve. An evaluation is proposed on future needs for a new Lodge. Mr Rake has made available the management plan for Stirling Park and associated sites. It can be viewed at: [http://www.nationalcapital.gov.au/index.php?](http://www.nationalcapital.gov.au/index.php?op-tion=com_content&view=article&id=2262&Itemid=861)

[op-tion=com_content&view=article&id=2262&Itemid=861](http://www.nationalcapital.gov.au/index.php?op-tion=com_content&view=article&id=2262&Itemid=861)

FOG has received a grant of \$17,200 from the ACT Natural Resource Management Council for control of weeds of national significance (not all weeds!), mainly blackberry and Chilean needle grass. We plan to hire a weed contractor to undertake this work at Stirling Park and Yarramundi Reach between March and November 2012.

The work party planned for 4 March was postponed due to rain. FOG's next work party at Stirling Park is scheduled for May 6 (closer to residential areas). It runs from 9 am to 4 pm and any help is welcome in that time. Please contact Jamie for more details if you would like to be involved (see details this page).

Free material

As part of the review of the FOG files and material in storage, we have identified some material we no longer wish to keep. If any member wishes to have any of the following documents, email advocacy@fog.com.au by June; otherwise the documents will be thrown out:

An integrated catchment management framework for the ACT: 2000

Threatened Australian plants: overview and case studies: 1992 (ed JH Leigh and JD Briggs)

Inquiry into the establishment of an ACT prison: justification and siting: 1999

Habitat specialization and the isolation of remnant populations of the striped legless lizard: 1994 (Helen Osmond)

A study of the use of indicator groups in assessing the conservation value of native grassland sites in the ACT and NSW: 1994 (Penelope Greenslade)

Eastern gas pipeline:

1 – drainage, hydrology, water resources & water quality

2 – physical geology, geomorphology soils & seismic stability

5 – flora, fauna & ecology

Some information and someone else's submission on the Tuggeranong Homestead precinct

News Roundup *cont.*

OCCGR Working Bee

Trish Williamson

SAT 25 FEB After an early weather forecast that predicted a wet weekend, necessitating the possible postponement of the working bee at Old Cooma Common Grassland Reserve, the dedicated group of weeders returned to OCC to be greeted by brilliant sunshine and a 30°C day.

The team of volunteers (Jim, Trish, Warren, Andrew, Geoff, Margaret, Katy, Ian, Evelyn, June, Bob, Peter and Fiona) met on Radio Hill at 9.00 am. Well, most of us were there at 9.00 am; Warren and Andrew turned up an hour later, after a leisurely breakfast at The Lot! After receiving instructions from Margaret on what weeds to dispatch, we set off with secateurs, daubers and loppers to cut and bag verbasum and fleabane.

Jim and Geoff sprayed St John's wort and potentilla with quad bikes. Odd plants of St John's wort were widespread, and there were a number of patches that had been missed in the past. Jim also did experimental booming of verbasum rosettes in a severely degraded area, where contractors had sprayed African love grass in the past.

Margaret daubed verbasum, and intends to monitor these plants for regrowth as a result of 8 inches rain in the week preceding the working bee. Margaret also reported severe track damage, with ruts to 12 inches deep in some parts.

Throughout the day peregrine falcons with young in training were spotted, and a pair of stubble quail was disturbed and took flight.

By the end of the day (about 3.30 pm), we had 26 bags of verbasum heads. A refreshing cuppa was most welcome, as were the home-made scones, home grown raspberry jam and cream (from the house cow) provided by Peter and Fiona.

Swamp Foxtail – Plant Cautiously, Monitor Carefully

John Fitz Gerald

A recent email from Angela Calliess at Greening Australia ACT region initiated a conversation with many contributors expressing concerns about garden plantings of *Pennisetum alopecuroides*. Angela had been asked recently by a landowner along Burra Creek for an opinion on a tussocky grass which seems to be on the increase along part of the local creekline.

P. alopecuroides grows as a tussock to 1 metre tall with striking and upright summer inflorescences resembling foxtails. The species is listed as native to eastern NSW and southern Queensland. Several cultivars are available in nurseries and the plant is recommended in quite a few grass-planting resources for gardeners. A major concern is that the plant has become naturalised in wetlands in parts of southern and eastern Victoria and that the species is known to strongly self seed, so has a high capacity for garden escape anywhere. It certainly should not be planted near bushlands where it can potentially invade and compromise any existing natural populations.

Dave Mallinson reports problems recognized from old plantings at the Australian National Botanic Gardens, Adam Muyt likewise from previous experience in Melbourne, and Rainer Rehwinkel will soon eradicate all specimens from his well-

known native garden in Bungendore. A web search will reveal similar warnings, including a note from 2003 in the Growing Native Plants site at ANBG, documents on *Pennisetum* species in a number of Weed Management Guides, and in the Southern Tablelands and South Coast Noxious Plants Committee (within the entry for its noxious exotic relative Fountain Grass, *P. setaceum*).

Please read these if thinking about Foxtail plantings anywhere in the SE Tablelands region!

Finally, Dave Mallinson also advises of classification changes for these grasses in 2010 now accepted by all Australian Herbaria and implemented in ANBG resources such as APNI and Australian Plant Census: - *Cenchrus purpurescens* is now used in place of *P. alopecuroides*, and *C. setaceus* in place of *P. setaceum*.

Hall Cemetery in brief

Janet Russell

SAT 10 MARCH Seven people attended the working bee at Hall Cemetery including a guest worker, Des Hoban from Brisbane who works with a Landcare group conserving a riverine environment. We grubbed eucalyptus re-growth in the Cemetery proper. In the surrounding woodlands we cut and daubed briar and hawthorn re-growth. Also on the northern section more work was done cutting and removing fleabane and spear thistle heads.

The next working bee will be on Saturday 12 May at 9 am. The entrance to Hall Cemetery is on the right side of Wallaroo Rd about 300 metres after turning off the Barton Highway. Morning tea will be provided. All are welcome. Ring Andy Russell on 6251 8949 if you would like to join us.

Photo: Swamp foxtail grass by John Fitz Gerald.



News Roundup *cont.*

FOG AGM

Heather Sweet

TUES 20 MARCH Twenty-one people packed the Conservation Council Meeting Room for the FOG AGM. The champagne and nibbles prepared by Margaret and Sarah were much appreciated. The meeting began at 6pm with John Fitz Gerald presenting the Treasurer's report and audited accounts.

Annual reports from the President, Secretary, Membership, Advocacy, FOG Activities Program, FOG Website, Newsletter, e-Bulletin, Publications, Indigenous Values in Landscapes, FOG/Fenner work to restore grasslands on National Capital Estate, Hall Cemetery, Old Cooma Common Grasslands Reserve, Scottsdale Monitoring, BoB Gungahlin, Conservation Council Biodiversity Working Group, Woodlands Restoration Group, and BoB Molonglo were also presented. These reports will be published in this and the coming newsletter.

The election of offices then took place, with a few changes occurring. Stephen Horn is the incoming Treasurer. Kris Nash and John Buckley also joined the committee. Kris was appointed Secretary at the committee meeting a week later. John thanked the retiring committee members, in particular Sandra Hand for her efforts as Treasurer, Isobel Crawford, outgoing Vice President who remains on the committee, and David Eddy for their many years of service to FOG.

Following the AGM, a short discussion was held on the distribution of grants and contributions received by FOG before a large group moved on to dine at Shalimars.

Festival of the Forests

Janet Russell

SUN 1 APRIL John Fitzgerald and I staffed the FOG tent at the Festival of the Forests held at the National Arboretum Canberra. The Canberra Times reported on 2 April that more than 12000 people attended this event.

There were a number of similar interest groups present amongst the 25 other exhibitor tents, such as Canberra Ornithologists, ANBG, STEP and the Conservation Council. The interest in FOG unfortunately was not proportionate to the number who attended but we made some nice connections with those who did have an interest. The pamphlets taken mostly related to weeds including African lovegrass (*Eragrostis curvula*) and garden plants going bush. We were also able to distribute a number of our newsletters so that people could see the kind of activities we are involved in.

Southern Tablelands Ecosystem Park (STEP) @ Festival of the Forests

Andy Russell

STEP is an organisation that has been allocated a block at the National Arboretum Canberra for the purpose of establishing a southern tablelands regional botanical garden. The highlight of the day for STEP was the launch of the new STEP brochure by the Chief Minister, Katie Gallagher before a small gathering of supporters.

The brochure was developed to try to encourage new garden makers in the proposed suburbs of Molonglo to think native. The aim is that gardeners will see their gardens as ecosystems that would complement the local bush and bring in small wildlife. STEP is promoting the use of indigenous plants (those local to the area) because of their adaptation to local conditions as well as their being suitable for low water-use gardens.

After the launch Katie Gallagher planted the first of a number of *Hardenbergia violacea* that were being planted as part of the understorey mosaic of Block 100 of the National Arboretum Canberra.

Traditional Land Management Practices

Geoff Robertson

Kosciuszko to Coast has applied for and received funding for a project on Traditional (Indigenous) Land Management Practices on the Monaro. The project is funded under the Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Authority's Community Partnerships Program and is now moving ahead. This project follows up the FOG Project "Indigenous Values in the Landscape" at which Rod Mason, Ngarigo elder and Traditional Land Management Scientist, described many traditional land management practices through a series of workshops and field days.

A draft booklet "Reintroducing Traditional Land Management Practices: Trialling a Methodology proposed by Rodney Mason" has recently been completed and will be trialled as part of the project. The project will engage land owners and managers through workshops and property visits. Recommendations will be made to individual landowners to encourage them to trial some Traditional Practices, including 'cool burning'. Landowners managers will be followed up to evaluate the trial.

Earlier this month a new newsletter "Traditional Land Management Practices" was launched by K2C. The newsletter will keep those who participated in the FOG workshops, and those wishing to be part of the project, up-to-date with news on developments.

If you want to receive the booklet or newsletter, please contact me - geoff.robertson@iprimus.com.au.

Walk among the Snow Gums

Aranda bushland walk upgrade

By Naomi Fallon

THE importance of Aranda's bushland has been verified with the renewal of the Frost Hollow to Forest Walk.

More than a decade after the guided walk's signs were installed, the Friends Of Aranda Bushland have used a \$4000 federal grant to update the existing signage, offer an alternative return with additional signage and update the walk's information brochure.

The group's convenor Jean Geue said the walk provided a rare opportunity to see the heritage-listed Aranda Snow Gums alongside 10 different species of eucalypts.

"That's about half of the main species that appear in the ACT," she said.

"It's an excellent way of learning how to identify the trees."

Mrs Geue said the group first came across the area in 1990, just after the Friends of Aranda Bushland had formed.

Despite realising its importance immediately, she said it wasn't until 1999 that the group secured a grant to signpost the walk.

"After 10 years the signs got a bit

scrappy and I found it's very difficult to get additional funding for something you've already done once," she said.

"We were able to get a Caring for Our Country grant ... that attracted a multiplier effect."

The Frost Hollow to Forest Walk also received an additional \$400 donation from Aranda Primary School and ACT Parks and Conservation Service loaned considerable support to the project.

"It's been quite an extensive project," Mrs Geue said.

"The walk's now much easier to do."

Member for Fraser Andrew Leigh launched the renewed Frost Hollow to Forest Walk - which takes one to two hours to complete - on Saturday.

■ For more information on the Friends of Aranda Bushland, visit FriendsOfArandaBushland.org.au

Right, Friends of Aranda Bushland members Ian and Mary Falconer and convenor Jean Geue celebrate the launch of the new and extended self-guided walk.

Picture: Elesa Lee



Little love for invasive grass

By Meredith Clisby

ENVIRONMENTALISTS are showing no love for a species of exotic grass rapidly invading Canberra.

Experts warn that unless action is taken to stop the spread of African lovegrass it will replace the native species of plants throughout the capital and reach nature reserves.

A report into the distribution and abundance of the grass was launched by the Southern ACT Catchment Group last week.

The report's author, Sarah Sharp, said the main problem with African lovegrass was that it was highly invasive and would take over any ground-cover plant.

"It really just replaces other species completely," she said.

The grass has been prevalent in Tuggeranong for some time and it has spread to Gungahlin.

Ms Sharp said the report was partly to raise awareness of the problem and educate Canberra residents who might be unaware of the threat the species presented to the nation's capital.

"If we keep going as we are at the moment it will be a bigger and bigger problem," she said.

Ms Sharp said one of the major concerns was the lack of stable funding to control the grass.

African lovegrass requires a long-term management plan not a once-off treatment.

"The issue has been ... the surety of funding, you can't really plan ahead very well," Ms Sharp said.

She said the key to fighting the spread of the grass was to eradicate isolated infestations before they became established.

Southern ACT Catchment Group's Steve Welch said the grass was a huge problem for farmers because it was very difficult to control.

He said they would instead focus on pests they could eradicate, such as serrated tussock.

"The scary part is that there is no incentive for them to contain its boundaries, the spread continues," Mr Welch said.

He said the government's verge maintenance program also contributed to the problem as mowers carried the grass and spread it throughout Canberra.



Plant ecologist Sarah Sharp says that unless stopped, African lovegrass will replace the native species of plants throughout Canberra.

Picture: Elesa Lee

The Myer K2C Grassland Project

Geoff Robertson

K2C has received the exciting news that it is one of four projects to receive Myer Foundation Grassland funding. Over three years, \$200,000 will be provided to establish a K2C Grassland Conservation Management Network (CMN) and to contribute to a booklet on grassland management.

There have been many grasslands achievements in the K2C region. However, grasslands remain under serious threat, and their management is poorly understood and resourcing is poor. Nevertheless there are real opportunities to achieve results. These include: a strong regional commitment to grasslands, the existence of manager networks capable of expansion, the trialling of new management methods, many potential demonstration sites, the recently developed K2C Atlas that provides a powerful tool to document and promote grassland sites, and our growing experience in Traditional (Indigenous) Land Management Practices. K2C, its partners, including FOG, and associates bring to the project a strong commitment valuing nature and human society, a strong scientific underpinning, and a commitment to on-ground outcomes and educating the community.

The project would establish and maintain a Grassland CMN (of 100 landowners/managers and 200 sites), provide summary and site data on the K2C Atlas, provide on-ground incentives, assist managers in further funding applications, and publishing a management book. The outcomes we are seeking are to have our grasslands restored and properly managed, recovery of threatened and rare grassland flora and fauna species, an ongoing K2C CMN network, and stronger grassland advocacy. Our application outlined how the project would be evaluated, the risks, and how the project would be sustained.

For those not familiar with the concept, a CMN is a network of private and public landowners/managers with a common conservation purpose usually associated with a single ecological community. Normally it is facilitated by someone (or group) who combines social, organisation and technical skills to organise activities, and who can provide relevant knowledge and extension services, and assistance with or access to financing. In our case we would want to include institutions with large holdings as well as single smaller landowners.

The tasks we need to consider, are:

- Deciding on key demonstration sites on public and private land, the capture and release of data about the sites, and the development of a tour guide of grassland sites. Within this context how do we best use the K2C Atlas?

- Developing a posy of grassland plants and icons to capture the public imagination. The aim is to generate public support and to strengthen grassland advocacy.

- Creating a management model of a core team to run the project and a wider reference and direction giving group, developing a work plan and budget, and recruiting single or multiple suppliers. We need to determine what we want to achieve and the associated skills sets, how we add to and promote existing efforts, and what are the practical research issues we need to undertake to ensure the project's success.

- Determining what we have to offer and recruiting CMN membership. We need to address what activities to conduct and how we might seek additional resources (fundraising) to sustain the CMN and its members. We need a focused specialised newsletter.

- Determining what we want in a national booklet on grassland management. While not necessarily part of the booklet, we need a booklet or document to capture the history of grassland conservation in the K2C region.

-Establishing a working relationship the Myer Foundation and the other Myer grantees.

We are canvassing views about the project and we would welcome yours.

Plant Communities of the upper Murrumbidgee catchment

Rob Armstrong – NSW Office of Environment and Heritage

Botanists working with the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage have produced a plant community classification for the upper Murrumbidgee catchment by building on existing classifications including those completed by Rainer Rehwinkel (grasslands), Keith McDougall and Neville Walsh (treeless alpine areas) and Nicholas Gellie (Southern Regional Forest Assessment revision). The classification used statistical analysis coupled with expert botanical knowledge to describe 74 plant communities across the South Eastern Highlands and Australian Alps bioregions within the Murrumbidgee catchment. Six qualitative plant communities were also described which were unable to be quantified due to a lack of field samples available for analysis.

Plant communities classified within alpine complexes, rainforests, wet sclerophyll forests, dry sclerophyll forests, forested wetlands, freshwater wetlands, grassy woodlands and grasslands have been described. For each plant community, vegetation descriptions are accompanied with information on environmental variables, diagnostic species information, threats, frequently occurring weeds, reservation status, equivalent plant communities and estimated clearing rates. Each description of woody and wetland plant communities is accompanied with a distribution map, with many also containing a photo.

The report can be accessed from the Friends of Grassland website on [http://www.fog.org.au/Plant%20Community%20Classification%20Version1.1 05092011](http://www.fog.org.au/Plant%20Community%20Classification%20Version1.1%2005092011). I hope you enjoy using it as much as we enjoyed developing it!

Cultivation Corner:

An unseasonable season

Janet Russell

When you start growing plants that are new to you, you never quite know why they succeed or fail. I do heed planting instructions and I usually check out the NSW Her-

barium site to see where their natural home is and what sort of habitat they grow in. We have had so much rain over the past year that it's difficult to know whether what we are seeing in the garden is more to do with the season and not what we have done or left undone. There is always the unexpected which makes gardening such a pleasure.

We were intrigued to find a mass of bulbine seedlings round the base of one of our *Bulbine vagans*. This plant is native to the Northern Tablelands and Queensland and we

planted two of them in 2007. I am not sure whether the seedlings are *B. vagans* or *B. semibarbata* as we have planted a number of the latter in the past year, some of which are close by. *B. vagans* have never produced seedlings before. The seedlings may be just taking advantage of the shelter provided by the *B. vagans* whose

leaves persist through the dormant period. The plants grow to 60 cm and have shiny leaves. Their flowers are showy and they grow on long leafless stalks, exceeding the length of the leaves, and trailing along the ground, turning up at their ends to show off the flowers. They flower from October through to autumn and sometimes are the only colour in the garden.

The greenhoods (*Pterostylis* sp.) that we have in a pot did not like the season and I was disappointed that so few of them flowered last spring. I planned to lift and re-pot them – it

would be the second time I had done that since planting them in 2008. I needed to wait until they dried out, but because March was such a wet month I decided to put them in the shed to get them out of the rain. The time came to work on them and I found that they had germinated. I now have about 40 plants - the



warmth in the shed must have triggered their growth. I am wondering whether they will survive the winter.

I thought that I would update you on the problems we had with the dead patches in our Canberra grass (*Scleranthus biflorus*). As it seemed that the root rot responsible for this damage thrives in undisturbed soil, I decided to experiment. I scarified the soil under the dead patch with a hand weeder. Afterwards, the hole created by the breakdown of the dead vegetation gradually reduced, and the plant now looks whole and healthy and is spreading.

Photos:

Bulbine vagans and healthy Canberra grass by Janet Russell.

The Conservation Council has recently finalised the production of an excellent booklet *Belconnen's Treasures*. It offers short articles and photographs featuring sites of heritage significance in the Belconnen area. There is an interesting mix of cultural and ecological sites included. The texts for the natural areas are a skilled blend of description and natural history where the science of caring for these places is also spelt out. Some of the ACT's foremost ecologists and dedicated caring-for-country volunteers have contributed.

The Conservation Council ACT Region and the Canberra Archaeological Society are joint copyright-holders. It is available free of charge from the Conservation Council.

Gungahlin's Treasures was produced in 2009 featuring a similar range of fascinating and interesting sites that are surrounded by the new suburbs. Both booklets were grant-funded projects that covered production and printing. However the printing costs were only partly covered for *Gungahlin's Treasures* so it costs \$1 per copy.

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 email member-ship@fog.org.au with your e-mail address. Please advise us of address changes.

FOG advocacy

Naarilla Hirsch

February 2012

A proposal for Development of the Future Urban Areas of Kenny and Throsby in Gungahlin has been released for public comment under the EPBC Act. FOG voiced concerns about piecemeal development proposals, the need for a strategic approach to developments in the Gungahlin area, and lack of public scrutiny of the ACT Government's offset policy and *Gungahlin Strategic Offsets Package*, repeating views we have expressed in other recent submissions for this area. In particular FOG asks that there be no further development in Gungahlin until a strategic approach to grassland and box-gum grassy woodland conservation in Gungahlin is identified that includes input from the scientific and conservation community. We also ask that an environmental impact statement be required for any development in areas of higher conservation value in Gungahlin, including Throsby and Kenny, and also Moncrieff (rather than these developments being assessed under the "Merit Track" pathway).

There is a small area of natural temperate grassland in an open block in Campbell. This site was assessed by the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment (CSE) in 2009 as of category 2

quality but approaching a critical status. The FOG advocacy group concurred with this conclusion during a visit late in 2011. A development proposal for the block has been released for public comment under the EPBC Act. FOG believes that the grassland values of the site could be retrieved with appropriate management. We are disappointed that the option for retaining the NTG remnant and portraying it as a unique part of our natural heritage in the heart of Canberra (with signage about the significance of the area) was discarded early in the planning process. FOG is dissatisfied that appropriate offsets were not proposed, even though suggested at the public consultation session for this proposed development. FOG has made the same comments to the National Capital Authority, which has asked for public comment on draft amendment 74 relating to this site.

March 2012

The Commonwealth is assessing a proposed Lawson South Residential Development by "preliminary documentation" under the EPBC Act. The ACT Land Development Authority has released the original referral and the preliminary documentation for comment. FOG is encouraged by many facets of the approach to natural asset analysis in the preliminary documentation, particularly the offsets package, which appears to represent best practice in many regards. Particular aspects that FOG

noted were identification of a suitable direct offset area of like-for-like habitat in the Belconnen sub-region, to be added to the ACT Reserve system; earmarking an investment (supplementary funding) to enhance habitat in the offset area; careful management planning including monitoring and long-term auditing programs; and timescales set so that the offset strategies including management plans be in place prior to the commencement of any development. We look forward to learning the detailed outcome of the EPBC decision for this development proposal and hope that the full package can be carried through to reality.

Also released for public comment under the EPBC Act was a development proposal for Symonston (the "Amtech" site). FOG supports the mitigation measures outlined in the referral but has some concerns. In relation to the Public Land Management Strategy in the proposal, FOG is concerned about the lack of identification of resources to implement the Strategy, and its ability to preserve the larger patches of natural temperate grassland in perpetuity. FOG also expressed concern about the effectiveness of translocation of striped legless lizards, which is included in the proposal.

The full text of FOG submissions appears on our website.

Membership Report 2011

Kim Pullen

As at 5 March 2012, FOG membership stands at 164, of which 156 are paying memberships and 8 are honoraries. Memberships are spread across 5 states and territories of Australia, the breakdown being as follows:

ACT: 96 memberships (59% of total)
NSW: 58 (35%)
VIC: 7 (4%)
SA, WA: 1 each (<1% each)

Regarding distribution of FOG memberships within the ACT and region,

the most populous postcodes are:
2602 (inner North Canberra, ACT): 19
2614 (East Belconnen, ACT): 19
2620 (Queanbeyan and region, NSW): 15
2615 (West Belconnen, ACT): 11
2611 (Weston Creek, ACT): 9
2601 (Canberra City, ACT): 6
2630 (Cooma, NSW): 6
2902 (Kambah etc, ACT): 6
2550 (Bega and region, NSW): 4
2621 (Bungendore, NSW): 4.

As usual, the membership tally will rise through the year as more mem-

bers pay their annual dues. (For reference, a total of 212 memberships were current at the end of financial year 2011)

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: webmanager@fog.org.au.

Tomney's Plain: A Wetland Restoration Project

David Stein, Natural Resource Officer, Murrumbidgee CMA

Tomney's Plain, a montane peatland east of Tumbarumba, is a national listed wetland and an example of an endangered ecological community listed under the *Threatened Species Conservation Act*. The Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Authority is working with the managers of Tomney's Plain to protect and restore a 32ha area of wetland and surrounding native grassland.

Background

In the past, water flowing across Tomney's Plain would have ponded and flowed gently across the Plain but overgrazing from cattle and brumbies has incised and eroded waterways which feed into the Plain. The area of sphagnum bog and diversity of vegetation will be threatened if the natural hydrology is not maintained. The Friends of Grasslands survey, February 2011, revealed over seventy plant species in the bog area and over sixty species in the surrounding grassland.

Restoration Progress

In April 2011, earthen embankments were constructed to help restore the natural hydrology of the wetland and new fencing is being erected to protect the site. The earthen embankments were constructed with methods and advice based on restoration works successfully implemented by neighbouring landholders, and by NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Embankments were constructed with a combination of soil from disturbed areas, pea straw bales, shade cloth and revegetation. Suitable levee locations were identified along the incised channel below sites where pooled water could re-hydrate the wetland. Ten levees were initially constructed.

A mini-excavator was used to shape the levee area to the bottom of the existing gully to allow straw bales to be inserted into the eroded channel. The straw allows some water to pass through and will eventually break down once the gully has stabilised. Shade cloth was used over the bale/earthen embankment to reduce the risk of further erosion until the levees stabilise. Topsoil and vegetation were placed on top of the shade cloth with steel pickets, and wooden stakes were used where necessary to support the straw bales and hold the shade cloth in place.

Following construction, water began to spread and inundate previously dry areas of the Plain.

The site will continue to be monitored to assess levee function and success of redistributing the water across the Plain.

This project was funded through the Australian Government's Caring for our Country program.

Photos: Example of a completed levee bank (top) and water has begun to spread and inundate the plain (bottom) by David Stein.



CARING
FOR
OUR
COUNTRY



Murrumbidgee
CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

President's Report 2011

John Fitz Gerald

2011-12 has been another busy year for FOG and, at some risk of being biased, I consider this as a quite successful year. Please read the accompanying Reports from various important facets of the organization to find the evidence of that.

Details of solid finances, satisfactory membership levels, continued enthusiasm and progress in a whole range of endeavours, etc. are laid out in the individual Reports. These indicate that FOG's objective of advancing a range of causes for conservation of grassy ecosystems appears to me to have, once again, been met well and truly.

I will not comprehensively cover all of our endeavours nor note the individuals responsible. I expect that the regular arrival of your News of Friends of Grasslands through the year has kept the members reasonably well informed about these people, places and activities. However, I sincerely thank every one of FOG's many volunteers who have made FOG's year work well. I particularly thank those who have worked so hard and put in uncounted hours coordinating different events and responsibilities and undertaking Committee duties. FOG is extremely grateful that you choose to contribute so much.

Instead I will comment on a selection of major items, arranged in no particular order.

FOG has come to rely heavily on its electronic communications and website. Richard Bomford most capably upgraded our arrangements during the year to greatly improve reliability.

FOG has always shown a professional level of duty-of-care to its members and volunteers. This proved to be farsighted given the recent changes in legislation for health and safety for volunteer workers. A wide ranging procedures manual documenting critical operating matters, mostly compiled by Geoff Robertson, is in final stages of drafting, thanks to Naarilla Hirsch.

An innovative workshop series, Indigenous Values in Landscapes, was most successfully run under the experienced eyes and hands of Geoff Robertson. The large participation in these activities speaks for itself.

In the ACT, land development issues and their impacts on conservation have received wide comment in the media this year, many related to the large developments to the north in Gungahlin but also the projects now under way in Molonglo. FOG Advocacy team has been very busy evaluating and providing comment on proposals. FOG continues a close involvement with the Conservation Council ACT and its other member groups in seeking the best outcomes. There have been many frustrations about some decisions and exclusions, but recently some promising developments have occurred that hopefully present much improved opportunity for responsible land release practice.

The Kosciuszko to Coast group modified its organizational status and FOG is now a formal Group Member of K2C Inc. as well as one of the partners in K2C. K2C undertakes a wide range of programs with landholders and authorities in the Southern Tablelands and FOG looks forward to joint work in grassy ecosystems of the region.

The Committee decided to launch into a new space – FOG has rented a small storage unit that releases a group of members from the responsibility and inconvenience of storing records, papers and publications like Grassland Flora in (or under!) their own homes and garages. This is a much more satisfactory arrangement – thanks to David Eddy for doing most of the legwork in assessing and organizing the rental. FOG Records have been given a real spring clean thanks to major efforts by Janet Russell and Naarilla Hirsch, with help from Margaret Ning.

A FOG t-shirt went into production, sporting a great design by Michael Bedingfield. Thanks to David Eddy for dealing with both t-shirt printing and the initial sales.

The FOG-Fenner activity has been enthusiastically pushed along by Jamie Pittock – thanks to him for his major commitments of time and energy here, also to others who shared responsibility for catering, transport, etc. Many well organized on-ground events were held once again. As well as attracting the financial support of the NCA, a large grant has recently been awarded for control of Weeds of National Significance through the ACT National Resource Management Council. Finally the first real steps are being taken to support local residents in forming a Friends of Stirling Park group, aimed at conservation activity on a more frequent basis than FOG can manage.

There have been a series of changes in the people running FOG tasks.

- Al Gabb needed to step down as Secretary and the load was taken up by other committee members, principally Naarilla Hirsch – my thanks to her.
- Kim Pullen stepped in to take on the major role with Membership – thanks both to him and to Margaret Ning who has run this activity for many years.
- Heather Sweet took on the important role of Newsletter Editor and has done a stylish job too, as I'm sure its readers agree. She had big shoes to fill here but has done that very ably, including all the associated issues for production, printing, mailout, etc. all with a calm and cheerful manner.

I need to thank a few who have chosen to finish their current Committee roles at this AGM:

- Sandra Hand in her many years as Treasurer has seen a large increase in the level of funds that need to be accounted for, mainly due to increased activity from external Grants. She is rightly known for efficient support and sensible advice on all financial dealings including insurance.
- David Eddy has held a seat on FOG Committee for most of FOG's time and his contributions to many activities and advice on conservation issues are greatly valued. He will be missed.

- Isobel Crawford stands down as a Vice-President but has agreed to again be nominated for Committee.
- Benj Whitworth is thanked for his Committee contributions.

Finally, I needed to hit the ground running hard twelve months ago as a President coming in as a completely new face to FOG Committee – I can report that I certainly ran, though at times I admit to being a little unsure where I was going to finish. I can also report that I am still running (even now with this eleventh-hour report). While FOG is undoubtedly a challenge for me, it is extremely rewarding to be part of such a great team of interesting and talented individuals. I must especially thank Past-President Geoff Robertson for his continuing conspicuous (actually outstanding) contributions to FOG – he seems to pop up nearly everywhere, in on-ground work, newsletter, workshop activity, preparation of financial summary, policy advice and other areas. Thanks also to all on Committee for adapting to my ways of doing things.

Secretary's report – 2011

Naarilla Hirsch (acting)

Despite losing our secretary Al Gabb to an overseas posting early in the year and not having a replacement, we have managed to progress some records management issues as well as continue with the secretary's duties. One major change is that FOG has rented a storage space at Mitchell. This predominantly houses copies of *Grassland Flora*, with smaller amounts of space being taken up by FOG records and documents, T-shirts, cards, and dauber doovers. There is room for copies of *Woodland Flora* when it is printed.

An initiative championed by Janet Russell is the development of a records-disposal schedule and archiving of some of its records. The records-disposal schedule indicates which types of documents should be retained permanently, and which should be kept for shorter periods or be disposed of. This has greatly simplified the secretary's (and other committee members') record management tasks.

The following is for the interest of members about how FOG manages its records. Most of the records are in FOG's custody but there are regulations requiring the deposit of publications in the National Library of Australia (NLA). Copies of our newsletters have been deposited with and the NLA and the ACT Heritage Library (ACTHL). The NLA provides details of the newsletters in their holdings through a simple search engine (<http://trove.nla.gov.au/>). This states which are available to view in hard copy versus online. FOG's website also has copies of the later digital newsletters which can be read online. FOG minutes for the period 1997 – 2005 were transferred to the ACTHL in May 2009. The rest of the minutes are currently held by the FOG Secretary. Members can request access these records by contacting FOG's secretary.

Over the past few months, as no one stepped forward to become FOG's secretary, the secretary's duties have been split among several committee and non-committee members: Janet Russell, Margaret Ning, John Buckley, John Fitz Gerald and Naarilla Hirsch. We have spent some time going through 18 years of records and reducing them to documents that need to be retained permanently or for the next couple of years, as well as reorganizing the filing system. While Janet, Margaret and John B are willing to continue their parts of the secretary's role, Naarilla and John F are already fulfilling other, substantial roles for FOG, and need another member to take their place. Following the development of the records-disposal schedule and integration of the filing system, these duties are not great and could easily be done by someone with a few organizational skills and a little bit of spare time.

Publications (Books) 2011

Sarah Sharp

Grassland Flora

629 copies of *Grassland Flora* were sold in 2011. Two orders were for 100 or more books. Most sales were to conservation organisations (CMAs, NSW NPWS, etc.), and the Botanic Gardens bookshop remains a very big customer. In February 3000 copies of a revised edition were printed. Many thanks to Isobel Crawford and the authors for the work that went into the revision. With sales in the same ball-park as in 2010, it is envisaged that the 3000 copies will last for approximately 5 years. Since 1997 over 11,000 copies have been sold or distributed.

Woodland Flora

Progress is occurring on the *Woodland Flora*. Rainer Rehwinkel, Dave Mallinson, David Eddy and myself are approximately 2/3 of the way through the first draft. Photos are being sought to go with the text, with some generous offers from keen photographers. We are aiming to complete the book this winter and launch it in spring this year.

e-Bulletin 2011

Tony Lawson

The FOG e-Bulletin is a complement to the bi-monthly newsletter. It reminds members of FOG activities that occur some time after the distribution of the newsletter, and advises of events that did not make it into the newsletter.

The e-Bulletin also advertises non-FOG events that may be of interest to members. The editor welcomes information on such events.

The e-Bulletin is also distributed more widely to other organisations and to government agencies than the newsletter, to encourage an interest in FOG and to keep them informed of FOG's activities.

FOG Treasurer's Report 2011

Sandra Hand

I am standing down this year after 7 years as treasurer. I am sure that the new treasurer will do a fantastic job and I wish him every success.

I am going through the paperwork and realise what a jump we have taken in receiving membership monies by electronic transfer and paying accounts by EFT. I have to admit to driving this (we had only one payment of \$20 for whom we never found the owner).

I must thank, Margaret Ning and Geoff Robertson, Margaret because she has been the person to sign off all the payments I made since we took on electronic banking. One must have another person to sign the payment off just as if you had two people signing cheques.

Geoff Robertson comes to my rescue each year to put the finances into an accrual basis which is beyond my ability. I

have the accounts audited so that the balance matches the statements and the paperwork is filed, but Geoff puts the numbers into a form that is easily understood, taking into account the money from grants which is not spent in the same year and other adjustments that tend to make the bank account look un-natural, or as the dictionary puts it 'to happen or result as a natural growth'.

I must thank Sarah Sharp who handles all the publications and her meticulous record keeping that made my job easier and Janet Russell who empties the PO box and sorts the mail and posts the cheques and invoices to me.

All the committee members for trusting the invisible person who lives in Majors Creek and for passing my reports at committee meetings I could not attend.

Lastly I give great thanks to Bendigo Bank, our Community Bank in Braidwood who have been the easiest people to deal with and they return profits back to the community.

FOG Profit and Loss for 2011

	Excluding Publication Account	
	2011	2010
Income		
Membership	4,505.00	4,110.00
Donations	770.00	907.00
Income from projects	1,706.60	275.00
Income from merchandise	27.64	-26.50 R
Other income	366.00	350.00
Interest income	730.02	490.63
Total income	8,105.26	6,106.13 R
Expenditure		
Newsletter	2,229.50	1,205.70
Administration & stamps	908.48	2,102.96
Membership of groups	414.00	184.00
Storage	566.00	
Depreciation of assets	255.60	255.60
Miscellaneous	494.68	495.95 R
Total expenditure	4,868.26	4,244.21 R
Surplus/deficit	3,237.00	1861.92

FOG Balance Sheet for 2011
Excluding Publication Account

	2011	2010
Assets		
Bank deposits		
General account	9,907.87	17,036.70
Fixed term	12,761.10	22,668.97
Petty cash	50.00	50.00
Accounts receivable	0.00	0.00
Merchandise stocks	1,180.64	636.00
Equipment	766.80	1,022.40
Total assets	24,666.41	30,776.18
Liabilities		
Grant funds carried forward	2,894.67	13,451.44
Liabilities to Publication Fund	1,210.00	0.00
Other	0.00	0.00
Total liabilities	4,104.67	13,451.44
Members funds		
Opening balance	17,324.74	15,462.82
Plus surplus for year	3,237.00	1,861.92
Closing balance	20,561.74	17,324.74
Total liabilities + members funds	24,666.41	30,776.18

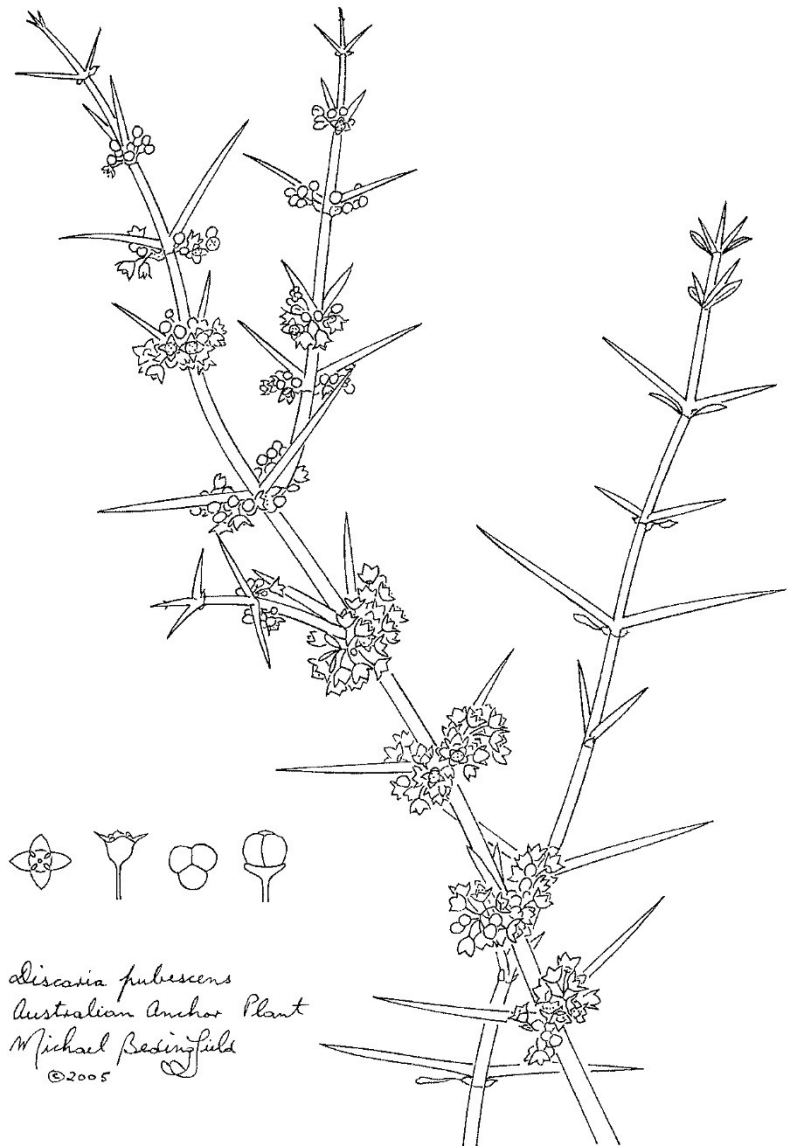
Australian anchor plant - *Discaria pubescens* - a special but thorny subject

Michael Bedingfield

The Australian anchor plant is a medium sized shrub with very large thorns and few leaves. When I first saw it, I thought it was another scungy weed and didn't give it much attention. However, it flowers profusely, and when I found it giving its quite attractive display I took more interest. It is a rare plant, and is described by Ian Fraser and Margaret McJannett in their book "Neighbours in trouble! Endangered plants and animals in the ACT". This book is well illustrated by Helen Fitzgerald, and is aimed at young readers, but it is a useful reference for its subject. It also mentions our threatened grasslands, woodlands and river ecosystems.

The book tells us the Australian anchor plant was once considered to be endangered, but has now recovered and is described as rare. Despite its thorny nature it is edible to stock, and survives mainly in places that are too steep or rocky for grazing. In our region it is widely but sparsely distributed south of Goulburn, and also occurs in Vic, Tas and Qld. In the ACT it occurs in Namadgi National Park, and scattered along the Murrumbidgee River and other southern streams. For example, it can be found along the river between Pine Island and Point Hut Crossing.

This shrub grows up to two metres tall, with stiff branches lined with opposite pairs of sharp cylindrical spines. Small leaves up to 15 mm long occur only on new shoots, growing at the base of the thorns, but fall off after a while leaving the branches leafless. The branches and thorns are green in colour. Flowers occur in spring, in dense bunches around the base of the spines. They are white in colour, with four petals, about five mm across, and are quite fragrant. The fruit is a small capsule with three lobes sitting on a disc-like base. When the seeds disperse the base remains in place, and gives the reason for the first part of the botanical name, which is *Discaria pubescens*. The second part refers to the downy hairs that occur on the stems.



A drawing provided shows a new branch with temporary leaves, and another in flower, at about two thirds of normal size. The flowers and fruit have been enlarged slightly for illustration. The Australian anchor plant is another example of how a species' importance is not related to how it looks. This one is worth looking after, along with so many of our threatened native plants and animals.

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.), Sarah Sharp (Vice Pres.), Kris Nash (Sec.), Stephen Horn (Treas.), Kim Pullen, Isobel Crawford, Naarilla Hirsch, Tony Lawson, Margaret Ning, John Buckley and Evelyn Chia. 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: 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 stephen.horn@fog.org.au.

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

Membership and newsletter despatch See Membership box (page 1). 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.