



News of Friends of Grasslands

Supporting native grassy ecosystems

November-December 2012

ISSN 1832-6315

Program - take the diary out now

SAT 3 NOV, 9.30 am – 3.00 pm **Old Cooma Common Grassland Reserve working bee.**

Register with margaret.ning@fog.org.au. See last newsletter for details.

SUN 11 NOV, 9.00 am – 12.30 pm **Visit to Rowes Lagoon, Collector.** Register with

sarah.sharp@fog.org.au. See last newsletter for details.

SAT 17 NOV, **Visit to Libby and Ian Keen's property at Harolds Cross.** Register with margaret.ning@fog.org.au.

SUN 18 NOV, 9.00 am – 12.00 pm **Yarramundi Reach work party.** Register with jamie.pittock@fog.org.au

SAT 24 NOV, 9.00 am – 12.00 pm **Hall Cemetery working bee.** Register with andy.russell@fog.org.au

SAT 24 NOV, 9.00 am – 12.00 pm **Stirling Park work party.** Register with jamie.pittock@fog.org.au

TUES 11 DEC, 6.00 pm – 9.00 pm. **FOG Christmas picnic dinner at Dickson Wetland**, Hawdon Street. Register with isobel.crawford@fog.org.au. See p. 2.

Photo: FOG member Peter Ormay photographed Purplish Beard Orchid *Calochilus robertsonii* in open forest in Aranda Bushland. Australian National Botanic Gardens' *Australian Plant Image Index* (www.cpbr.gov.au) photo no. ara.253.

See page 11 for Michael Bedingfield's article and two fine drawings of this most beautiful orchid.



In this issue

Program

Coming events

News roundup

FOG advocacy

Canberra Airport Restoration Trial

Glossy Blacks and She-oaks

FOG Work Health and Safety

Purplish Beard Orchid

FOG groups and projects

Coming FOG Events

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

Visit to Keen's property at Harolds Cross

Saturday 17 November,
10.00 am – 3 pm.

Woodland visit, plus discussions on weed control. Bring morning tea and lunch, plus drinking water, sun protection and sturdy footwear.

Carpooling may be organised.

Please register with margaret.ning@fog.org.au.

Christmas Party Picnic Dinner

Tuesday 11 December,
6.00 – 9.00 pm.

Bring some food to share, plus a chair or rug, and socialise with FOG members by the shores of Dickson's beautiful new wetland. Six frog species have so far been recorded, along with at least 30 species of birds including a group of about five Hardheads, a true diving-duck. If the weather is poor, we can adjourn to Isobel's house nearby.

Please register with isobel.crawford@fog.org.au.

Other events

Queanbeyan Nature Reserve

Saturday 10 November,
11.00 am – 1.00 pm.

FOG members are welcome to attend this Queanbeyan Grasslands open day organised by Ranger Maggie Sutcliffe from the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage.

The purpose of the day is to encourage local awareness of the reserve, learn about its ecological values and understand their importance, and to encourage responsible access.

The reserve is in west Queanbeyan. Turn north-west off Lanyon Drive into McCrae St, then second left into Furlong Road.

Braidwood Biodiversity and Farming Fair

Friday 30 November,
9.00 am – 4.00 pm.

Volunteers are needed to help with a FOG stall at this fair hosted by the Upper Shoalhaven Landcare Council and Kosciuszko to Coast. The fair will feature regenerative farming ideas and innovations, fauna survey methods (reptiles, birds, bats and more), industry, government and community stalls, specialist guest speakers, demonstrations and displays. If you can spare an hour or so to help, please register with Andrew Zelnik before Friday 23 November at andrew.zelnik@fog.org.au or 'phone 6207 5870 (BH) or 6288 7864 (AH).

It will be held in Ryrie Park, east of the Palerang Shire Office and the Post Office in Wallace Street.

Brogo Fire in Grassy Woodlands Workshop

Saturday 10 November,
9.00 am – 12.30 pm

This Far South Coast Conservation Management Network workshop on using fire as a management tool for grassy woodlands will be led by local expert Jackie Miles.

RSVP to Alison.Rodway@cma.nsw.gov.au or 'phone 6491 8224 or 0417 246 896, by 7 November.

Do you want to advertise an event, job, etc through FOG?

The FOG e-Bulletin advertises both FOG and non-FOG activities which may be of interest to FOG members. It appears frequently (usually before a major FOG activity).

To publicise an activity etc., please provide a short description to the FOG e-Bulletin editor (see back page).

News Roundup

Stirling Park

Jamie Pittock

SAT AUG 25 The work party on the western side of the ridge was supported by 25 volunteers from ANU and local residents. The past two work parties here had cleared a massive ~200 m³ of weeds from a large patch of woodland. They highlight the value that the community puts on maintaining this habitat in central Canberra. Many of our weed piles are to be removed by NCA contractors this month. Our work west of the ridge increases the ecological health of the woodland adjoining the threatened embassy developments.

Conservation advocacy

FOG is campaigning to conserve Stirling Park and also Yarramundi Reach from development. These important habitats remain at risk from ad hoc development such as the proposed embassies at Stirling Park, because their land tenure does not prioritise conservation. FOG is calling for both sites to be rezoned for conservation rather than national capital purposes under the National Capital Plan. We are also calling on the Federal Government to consider the best options for reserving the areas as nature reserves and adequately funding their management.

FOG recently met Senator Gary Humphries in August and Dr Andrew Leigh MHR in September to seek their support for greater protection of Stirling Park and Yarramundi Reach. Further meetings with political leaders are planned.

Interesting new blog

Well known and respected Canberra naturalist and long time FOG member is now offering his knowledge of the natural world to us via his new blog, at

ianfrasertalkingnaturally.blogspot.com.au.

It is informative, witty and enjoyable, as Ian's writing always is. Highly recommended.

Yarramundi Reach

John Fitz Gerald

SUN SEPT 23 Chilean Needlegrass was spot sprayed by FOG volunteers and contractor team EnviroAg, employed on Weeds of National Significance funding awarded to FOG by the ACT NRM Council. FOG manages this grassland beside Lake Burley Griffin with the National Capital Authority. The best areas of lilies, and several other native species such as Blue Devil and Variable Plantain, occur where biomass was substantially reduced through controlled environmental burning by the NCA earlier in 2012.

Both FOG and NCA are delighted by such notable grasslands enhancement.



Photo above: By late October, swathes of Bulbine Lilies were showing beautifully, here flanked by two browned tussocks of weedicided Chilean Needle Grass (John Fitz Gerald).

News Roundup cont.

Hall Cemetery

Janet Russell

SAT OCT 13 Nine volunteers attended the working bee at Hall Cemetery. It was a cold start but we had warmed up by morning tea-time. We first checked the work done previously. There was some briar and hawthorn re-growth as well as a healthy population of thistle seedlings to replace the ones removed in the past year.

We counted the Bursaria. Four have now died, but 44 were looking healthy. I could not understand the last two losses, as they were reasonably robust specimens. There were plenty of young Blue Devil *Eryngium ovinum* which should be flowering by Christmas, depending on the season. They did not flower until the new year last season, perhaps because December 2011 was the fifth coldest on record for Canberra, with cloudy conditions and only a few hot days. The following species were flowering: Yam Daisy *Microseris lanceolata*, a Buttercup *Ranunculus* sp., Early Nancy *Wurmbea dioica* ssp. *dioica*, Bulbine Lily *Bulbine bulbosa*, Common Bog Rush *Schoenus apogon*, Common Everlasting *Chrysocephalum apiculatum*, and Common Billy-buttons *Craspedia variabilis*.

In the woodlands we cut and dabbed the Hawthorn and Sweet Briar regrowth. We sprayed or hand-pulled thistles and plantain and whipper-snipped the weedy grasses on the southern side to remove the flowering heads. We sprayed the Yorkshire Fog and Sweet Vernal Grass, using 10% glyphosate delivered with a narrow jet to ensure minimal collateral damage. We will follow this up to see if it works, as it will make it easier for us to conquer outliers within good patches of native vegetation. We also targeted Cleavers *Galium aparine*. There seemed to be more of this than we have seen before.

After inspecting the grasses on the northern side of the cemetery, the group concluded that the Yorkshire Fog and Sweet Vernal Grass were more than we could deal with, and that we would need the assistance of the Hall Cemetery management team.

Geoff Robertson found a leaf-curling orb-weaver

spider with an abdomen the colour of a bright yellow wattle flower. Such finds are one of the many joys of being outdoors on a sunny spring morning.

If you would like to join our next working bee on 24 November, please contact Andy Russell on 6251 8949.



Photo: Margaret Ning preparing weedicide, with John Fitz Gerald at Hall Cemetery (Geoff 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.

To receive it, please email membership@fog.org.au. Also, please let us know of email address changes.

News Roundup cont.

Scottsdale African Lovegrass annual monitoring

Linda Spinaze

WED OCT 17 We had exceptional weather, so it was a real pleasure to be outside, despite the over-abundance of African Lovegrass! Eight happy volunteers split into three groups. One monitored the variably-grazed areas, and the other two the non-grazed areas.

Every 4 years we record all species in a 20 m x 20 m plot in the grazed areas, and this was one of those years. So the monitoring took a bit longer than usual, but we were still finished by 3.30.

My thanks to John Buckley, John Fitz Gerald, Geoff Robertson, Marg Roseby, Pamela Orr, Marg Ning, and especially Sarah Sharp who makes sense of the data.



Photo: Tussock Skink *Pseudemoia pagenstecheri* is a grassland specialist. This male caught at Scottsdale was growing a new tail and shedding skin. The white shoulder stripe and orange lateral stripe are key features for males of this species on the Southern Tablelands (Geoff Robertson).

Environmental Defender's Office (ACT)

Naarilla Hirsch

The Environmental Defender's Office (EDO) is the non-profit community legal centre for the ACT. It advises on environmental and planning law.

The EDO educates the community about access to the legal system, and legal processes and rights. It provides legal assistance to those seeking to protect the environment in the public interest and who cannot otherwise afford such services. It also scrutinises and

comments on existing and proposed legislation to ensure it considers the effect on the environment and on future generations.

More information is available from www.edo.org.au/edoact/index.html.

The EDO recently assisted the ACT Conservation Council in its successful appeal against development proposals in Coombs earlier this year. As a result, it was agreed that almost all of the endangered Pink-Tailed Worm Lizard habitat, and more of the Molonglo River Corridor, will be outside the bushfire buffer zone rather than in it.

One of the EDO's aims for this financial year is to achieve 50+ members so that it can qualify for tax deductibility status as an environmental organisation. It is hoped that additional financial support will allow the EDO to increase the services offered. The EDO is asking individuals as well as organisations to become members. FOG is a member, but if you are interested in becoming an individual member, go to www.edo.org.au/edoact/support.html#membership. Annual membership is only \$5.

Draft ACT Nature Conservation Strategy 2012 – 22

The new *Nature Conservation Strategy* will help guide planning for the Territory's open spaces, rural areas, urban areas, riverine corridors, and nature reserves, and guide investment of funding and resources in nature conservation.

It is designed to improve the opportunities for ACT residents to enjoy parks, reserves and open space, as places for recreation, amenity, self-renewal and education. It focuses on the importance of planning and management of nature conservation at 'whole of landscape' scales across a range of land uses and tenures.

The draft Strategy also proposes actions to support the diverse volunteer base that contributes tens of thousands of hours of unpaid work helping to manage the ACT's natural areas.

Submissions are welcome and due on 10 December 2012. Directions are on pages 26-27 of the Draft, available at timetotalk.act.gov.au/community-engagements/?engagement=draft-nature-conservation-strategy.

News Roundup cont.

Conservation Council ACT's pre-election forum

Sarah Sharp

The ACT Legislative Assembly election held on 20 October elected 8 ALP Members, 8 Liberal and 1 Greens.

On Friday 21 September, a lively crowd had gathered at Pilgrim House for the Conservation Council's forum "Our Future, Our Environment". It was great to see such a large crowd interested in environmental issues and wanting to become better informed on the policies of the three main parties.

The forum was chaired by Louise Maher, ABC 666 Drive Presenter.

MLAs who spoke were Simon Corbell (then ACT Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development) for the ALP, Vicki Dunne (then Shadow Minister on Nature Conservation and Water) for the Canberra Liberals, and Shane Rattenbury (then Greens Spokesperson on Environment, and on Energy) for the ACT Greens.

The MLAs then answered questions from an expert panel consisting of Professor Barbara Norman (Foundation Chair in Urban and Regional Planning, University of Canberra, and Chair of the ACT Climate Change Council), Professor Andrew Blakers (Director of the Australian National University Centre for Sustainable Energy Systems) and Christine Goonrey (member of the Bushfire Advisory Council, President of the Australian National Parks Council, and Secretary of the Conservation Council ACT Region).

The audience was pleased to hear that both ACT Labor and the Greens are committed to protecting Kinlyside from urban development. Vicki Dunne did not rule out protection, but noted that she had insufficient information to make a clear commitment. Kinlyside is listed for urban development in North Gungahlin, but includes 120 hectares of critically endangered yellow-box-red-gum woodland. It was flagged in the 2004 *Woodlands Strategy* as a priority area for conservation because of its ecological values.

The Conservation Council was also reassured to hear Minister Corbell's commitment to a strategic environmental assessment of North Gungahlin.

All parties are committed to introducing a new Nature Conservation Act as a priority, and all demonstrated a strong commitment to Active Transport measures, although the Liberals seem to have a strong emphasis on road infrastructure.

The audience warmly welcomed the Liberal's preference for biodiversity and conservation administration to be integrated into a single agency covering research, policy, monitoring and regulation.

Before the Forum, ACT Labor and the Greens had announced their climate change policies, outlining plans for achieving the 2020 40% greenhouse gas reduction target.

"The Conservation Council welcomes the ALP and Greens support for a 90% renewable energy target for the ACT as well as their energy efficiency plans," said Executive Director Clare Henderson.

"Since October 2010, the ACT has had the most ambitious and legislated greenhouse gas reduction targets in Australia, but has lacked a detailed and costed plan to achieve those targets. It is promising we now have two plans on the table! They differ, and we need to look into the detail of that. However we look forward to being involved in seeking ways of sorting out a common path" said Ms Henderson.

Research consistently demonstrates that the public considers that protecting the environment and proactively managing natural resources should be a priority for the ACT Government. So it is important for the voting public to hear these policies.

Our unique environment underpins the social and economic fabric of the ACT. Our vision is for the highest quality environment for the Australian Capital Territory Region. The Council supports a compact, ecologically sustainable, liveable and socially inclusive Canberra which embodies the principles of carbon neutrality and zero waste.

News Roundup cont.

FOG advocacy

Naarilla Hirsch

August 2012

FOG's submission to the Australian Heritage Council on the proposed national heritage listings for Canberra emphasised the significance of the endangered Natural Temperate Grassland (NTG) and Box-Gum Woodland areas of national significance around Lake Burley Griffin (Scrivener's Hut, Yarramundi Reach and Stirling Ridge) and in central Canberra (York Park and St Marks, Barton). FOG's view was that these areas, so close to some of the nation's most significant built heritage, strengthen the case for Canberra's national heritage listing. FOG also asked that the nomination include a recommendation for revising the National Capital Plan to formally recognise and preserve the heritage values set out in the proposed heritage listing.

The NSW *Native Vegetation Regulation* is being reviewed, and FOG has commented on two of the associated discussion papers. Its comments on the *Managing Native Grasslands Discussion Paper* included the view that all areas containing the defined NTG ecological community should be subject to similar assessment and consideration of offsets using the same criteria. FOG pointed out that areas of poorer condition may improve with better management, that assessment of sites should use existing methods, and that grassland sites need to be assessed in spring or early summer to ensure the data are collected at the best time of the year to determine accurately the sites' biodiversity. With regard to the *Native Vegetation Regulation 2012 Environmental Outcomes Assessment Methodology*, FOG was not able to apply the assessment methodology to grasslands it is familiar with, to ascertain the appropriateness of both methodology and the benchmarks used. However, it was concerned that benchmarks may be set too low, resulting in clearing of NTG of reasonable or good quality.

The Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Grassland of the South East Corner Bioregion (NSW) ecological community has been nominated for listing

as critically endangered under the federal Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. FOG has enjoyed several visits to the NSW far south coast and hinterland and has come to appreciate both the diversity and importance of this community, and of the threats to its continuing survival. FOG strongly supported this nomination and the priority conservation actions in the listing advice, plus the recommendation for a recovery plan.

September 2012

FOG commented on the Jerrabomberra Wetlands draft master plan. The interface zone with the planned East Lake development has been placed within the reserve, and FOG's view was that this buffers should not impinge on the nature reserve. FOG suggested the addition of grassland forb species to the proposed plantings, and raised the question of the possibility of regeneration with native grasses and forbs of the exotic grassland areas immediately north of the wetlands in the long term. FOG also strongly supported eradication of declared weed species and control of dominant weeds, as outlined in the master plan, particularly given the presence of high quality NTG nearby.

The NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure sought public comment on a proposal to develop a wind farm at Collector. Although FOG would prefer towers to be placed only within exotic pasture, we were pleased to see that the proposed offset area is larger than required, and that it will be managed for conservation. FOG also supported the mitigation actions in the proposal, but was surprised to see little data on impacts from the two existing Collector wind farms in the proposal.

The full text of FOG submissions is on our website.

FOG website

The FOG website www.fog.org.au attracts more than 2,000 visits per month. If there is anything you would like to contribute, please email webmanager@fog.org.au.

Airport Eastern Grassland Restoration Trial

Naarilla Hirsch

FRI OCT 12 FOG joined Canberra Airport staff, Greening Australia (Capital Region) (GA), and others in a group of 28 visiting the Airport's Eastern Grassland, where a grassland restoration trial is being undertaken by GA for Capital Airport Group (CAG).

Noel McCann (CAG) provided background to both the site and the trial. The purpose of the trial is to test methods of broad acre restoration to rehabilitate other airport grasslands, including near the runways where hand restoration is not feasible. CAG hopes that the results will be of use to others restoring grasslands in the region. The restoration work is being done by GA. It is part of Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act offsets for Airport developments that have impacted on natural temperate grassland.

The airport grasslands are slashed regularly for operational reasons, and the slash left on the ground. The trial site has been used since the 1930s by the airport and the RAAF. It has been mown regularly, and some parts sown to sub-clover in the past. The soil is higher in nitrogen as a result. It was chosen in part because only low security access is required, so it is easier to visit for restoration work and monitoring. It is hoped that the restoration work will increase the number of species in this part of the airport. The dominant grass is Tall Speargrass *Austrostipa bigeniculata*, and Golden Sun Moth occurs throughout the area, so the treatments selected are sensitive to the moth's requirements.

Graham Fifield and Bindi Vanzella from GA described the methods. The site was spot-sprayed for Serrated Tussock and Chilean Needlegrass before the trial began. Eight 20 m x 20 m plots were established for the initial stage in spring 2011, and two 150 m long strips for the second stage in autumn 2012. Soil samples were taken from each area for nutrient testing.

In four plots, the large amount of accumulated thatch was removed and 40 2 m x 2 m squares were established for the different planting treatments being trialled. These plots were then mown to about 5 cm and the slash removed.

In spring 2011, tube stock was hand-planted in five of

the 2m x 2m squares in two of the trial plots, and hand seeding was done in five of the 2 m x 2 m squares in the other two plots. Five control (unplanted) squares were left in each trial plot. Plants and seed selected were of species which occur in natural temperate grasslands in the ACT and surrounding districts, including some seed from the airport. Bird-attracting species (unsuitable near a runway) were excluded, as were those unlikely to persist under mowing. Species used included *Chrysocephalum apiculatum*, *Goodenia pinnatifida*, *Bulbine bulbosa*, *Leucochrysum albicans*, *Dichopogon fimbriatus*, *Plantago varia*, *Leptorhynchus squamatus*, *Wahlenbergia* sp. and *Microseris lanceolata*.

The other four plots were retained as controls, with regular mowing and no thatch removal. Removal of the slash after each mowing will hopefully decrease the soil fertility and thereby disadvantage exotic species and advantage native.

Alison Rowell, environmental consultant and FOG member, has monitored the site for in the spring and summer of 2011 (i.e. before and soon after planting). All plants present were recorded, and frequency and cover scores assessed. The preliminary results suggest a decrease in the dominance of *A. bigeniculata*, an increase in bare ground and no increase in weed cover. There was also an increase in the number of species recorded, which was partly a seasonal effect but was also greater in the trial plots.

In the second stage, GA mechanised site preparation and direct seeding in the two 150 m strips. This required finding the right sort of machinery for each step. The mechanical treatment and seeding was done in autumn 2012, and so far appears to have had better results than the hand seeding and planting.

Because it was difficult to obtain sufficient seed for broad acre seeding, GA has established a seed production system to grow and harvest suitable species. As part of a *Caring for Country* project, GA is joining the Australian National Botanic Gardens and CSIRO to develop seed production methods for native plants, with the Airport's Eastern Grassland one of the beneficiaries.

This was a fascinating look at an interesting project, and I look forward to hearing its long term results.

Kosciusko to Coast : Planting She-oaks To Support Glossy Black-Cockatoos

John Fitz Gerald

K2C has just commenced a large new project involving the Glossy Black-Cockatoo *Calyptrorhynchus lathami* (GBC) thanks to a major funding success through the Great Eastern Ranges Initiative, an Australia-wide conservation vision (www.greateasternranges.org.au).

The GBC's natural range extends down eastern Australia from central Queensland to eastern Victoria. K2C's request for funding was targeted at just a part of that range: "The GBC is listed as vulnerable in NSW. A number of factors have contributed to its vulnerability, including land clearing, ongoing loss of hollow-bearing trees, urbanisation and over-grazing. Its vulnerability is also related to its specialist feeding habits. It feeds exclusively on *Allocasuarina* (she-oak) species, which are particularly susceptible to browsing and lack of recruitment because of inappropriate grazing."

The project aims to increase the extent of and connectivity between patches of GBC foraging habitat in the region between Queanbeyan and Cooma, by expanding the presence of Drooping She-oak *Allocasuarina verticillata*, GBC's main source of food on the inland side of the Great Dividing Range. The planting of some nest-tree species and associated shrubs among the Drooping She-oaks will enhance the habitat value for other threatened birds too. Trees planted will complement plantings carried out earlier in the ACT, Queanbeyan and Michelago.

Six K2C Partners will co-operate in the project: Greening Australia, NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, Molonglo Catchment Group, Upper Murrumbidgee Landcare Committee (which represents several local Landcare groups), Bush Heritage Australia and Friends of Grasslands. The Canberra Ornithologists Group, an Associate Member, will also be centrally involved. Greening Australia, which has extensive experience in the propagation and planting of she-oaks, will carry out

the bulk of the work, with the other Partners providing support.

The project will run from 1 November 2012 to 30 June 2013. Ten thousand *A. verticillata* will be planted across 2000 ha on 20 properties in the Upper Murrumbidgee region. Seed collected from the region will be used for propagation and planting. Photo monitoring will gauge success at every planting site and viability will continue to be assessed. The community will be asked to submit records of birds and plants via K2C's *Atlas of Living Australia* link. Knowledge and skills will be imparted through training sessions, public meetings and field days.

The project is also expected to demonstrate the benefits of a good understanding of species, ecosystems and local landscapes and their requirements for long term health, not only by external experts but especially by local landowners and communities.

There is already much information on the current distribution of Glossy Black-Cockatoos and Drooping She-oaks in this region but also plenty of gaps. Therefore, if you have these trees on your property and/or have seen Glossy Black-cockatoos locally, K2C would be very grateful to hear about it.

Further details of the project can be obtained from K2C (contact Tony Robinson (02) 6235 9334, mob 0409 776 705 or tandgrobinson@bigpond.com).

To record all sightings, please 'phone the K2C Facilitator, Lauren Van Dyke on 0411 402 978 or email facilitator@k2c.org.au.

John Fitz Gerald collated the information above from K2C's *Groundcover Newsletter* No 12 and K2C Inc's successful proposal form.

FOG Work Health and Safety

Naarilla Hirsch

Safe Work Australia earlier this year released *The Essential Guide to Work Health and Safety for Volunteers*, which provides information on how the new work health and safety (WHS) laws apply to volunteers, and on volunteers' rights and obligations. It outlines how volunteers can meet their work health and safety duties and explains what volunteers can expect from the organisation they volunteer for.

A 'volunteer association' such as FOG, made up only of volunteers working together for a community purpose (i.e. with no paid workers) is not governed by the WHS Act and therefore does not have mandated work health and safety duties. The guide notes that, although such organisations and volunteers are not governed by these new WHS laws, they should always take care that instructions be issued carefully and consequent voluntary work be conducted safely. Some other activities are not covered by WHS laws, e.g. leading a bush walk with a group of young people on a weekend.

Therefore FOG will follow the guidelines and spirit of the Act, and will ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of all of its workers, including volunteers. To do this, FOG might provide workers with training, information and instructions on how to do the work safely, personal protective equipment and first aid facilities or training. FOG already does this by having at least one person with first aid training at each working bee, and requiring formal Chemcert (herbicide application) and chainsaw training for volunteers for such activities with FOG.

Under the WHS Act, volunteers are required to take reasonable care of their own health and safety and to not disaffect that of others. Tasks must be done in a safe way, and reasonable work health and safety instructions, procedures and policies must be followed. 'Reasonable care' is considered to be everything that a reasonable person would do in the circumstances, considering things like personal knowledge, personal skills and the resources available.

The Guide notes that volunteers are generally not covered by workers' compensation laws. Therefore FOG annually purchases voluntary worker's liability insurance for all activities including excursions and working bees. This insurance requires that volunteers taking part in a FOG activity must fill out the sign-on sheet on arrival.

Members (and volunteers) are invited to download the official information guide from the website: www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/SWA/Legislation/volunteers/Documents/Volunteers_Guide.pdf. FOG will continue to set high standards for health and safety. Please direct questions about these matters either to the leader of any event which you attend, or to the FOG Secretary.

Work for the Conservation Council ACT Region

Assistant Director - Policy and Communications

Full or part-time. \$66,300 pro rata (ongoing)

Support the organisation in policy and advocacy, and communications and event management.

Bush on the Boundary Coordinator

Full or part-time. \$58,406 pro rata (9-12 months)

Engage the community and design policy for urban-environment interface issues.

Treasures Project Officer

Casual. \$27ph (casual)

Co-ordinate the publication and launch of our Treasures booklet series. Manage events at the 2013 Heritage Festival.

For position descriptions and selection criteria search www.consact.org.au, or contact Robyn Coventry on 02 6229 3200 or at finance@consact.org.au.

Closing date: 5pm Friday, 9 November.

Purplish Beard Orchid – an unusual and surprising plant

Michael Bedingfield

Life is an amazing miracle, which is not always properly understood by modern science. And another wonderful miracle is that each living thing is able to recreate a new version of itself. This is an incredible concept, which we casually take for granted. Each species makes a huge effort in this process of reproduction. Individuals put their own essence and life force into making new life, and as a result that species continues to endure. Moreover, in the plant world, the main method of self-multiplying happens through flowers, and there is an enormous variety of different flowers, from the miniscule to the very large, from the plain to the spectacular, so many different colours and shapes. Among the more unusual and surprising, is the Purplish Beard Orchid, known botanically as *Calochilus robertsonii*.

This plant is a perennial, which preserves itself in underground tubers when dormant. If conditions are favourable, its growing season will at first see a long primary leaf grow from the tuber. Later an erect stem will grow, up to 45 cm tall, with a few smaller leaves and a raceme of up to 9 flowers. The peak flowering time locally is October and November. The flower itself looks a bit like a bearded man's face, the purple-coloured beard being the surprising item. The rest of the flower is grey-green in colour, with maroon veins, and three cm across. The beard is part of the structure called the labellum. In the centre of the flower grows the 'column', which has the male and female parts, and which has a pair of glands at the top that look like a pair of eyes. The hood above this is called the dorsal sepal, and the two wing-shaped things are lateral sepals. There is also a pair of lateral petals on each side of the column, and that completes the flower's basic design.

The natural habitat for *Calochilus robertsonii* (pronounced cal-oh-KIE-lus rob-ert-SOH-nee-eye) is woodland and open forest. It can be found, if you know where to look, in the Aranda Bushland and Black Mountain Nature Reserve, and other ACT areas. It is widespread, from the coast to the inland slopes, being found in NSW, Vic, Qld, Tas, SA, WA and NZ. A good book to have on the subject of orchids is "Field Guide to the Orchids of New South Wales and Victoria", by Tony Bishop, which describes and provides photographs for about 500 orchids.



When you have not seen one before, finding the Purplish Beard Orchid growing in our native bush is a curious surprise. I have provided a drawing of the whole plant at about one-third normal size, with a flower stem at about two-thirds size. There is an incomprehensible number of ways that the various forms of life magically create new forms of themselves, enabling their species to continue into the future. This unusual orchid provides us with just one example.

FOG groups and projects

General inquiries

Contact info@fog.org.au, Sarah Sharp (0402 576 412) or Janet Russell (6251 8949).

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, Naarilla Hirsch, Tony Lawson, Isobel Crawford, 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:

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

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 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. Newsletter despatch is the fourth Tuesday of Feb, Apr, June, Aug, Oct and Dec. 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 to establish STEP, a regional botanic gardens and recovery centre at Canberra's International Arboretum. It showcases 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) is full of FOG information, back issues of *News of Friends of Grasslands*, and program details. Inquiries: webmanager@fog.org.au.