



News of Friends of Grasslands

Supporting native grassy ecosystems

January–February 2014

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Program

No events have yet been organised for January. A working bee is being planned for Stirling Park or Scrivener's Hut in late February.

Please check the e-Bulletin for its date and location.

Photo: Good quality grassy woodland at *The Poplars*, an iconic FOG site: Button Wrinklewort, Hoary Sunray and Lemon Beautyheads abound (Barbara Payne).

See page 6 for Naarilla's article.



It's membership renewal time!

Membership renewals are due on 1 January 2014.

The annual fee is:
\$50 for an organisation; \$20 for a single person or family; or \$5 for a student, pensioner or other concession holder.

The form is on our website www.fog.org.au.

Please fill it out and return with payment by email to membership@fog.org.au or by post to Friends of Grasslands Inc., PO Box 440, Jamison Centre, ACT 2614.

Payment options:
By electronic funds transfer to the FOG bank account (Friends of Grasslands Inc., A/c 124770835, Bendigo Bank, BSB 633 000. Please include your name in the reference/description.

Any queries, please contact (Mr) Kim Pullen, 0400 447 958 or membership@fog.org.au.

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Survey assistance sought at Stirling Park, January 2014

Sarah Sharp

Nine years ago Stirling Park was surveyed to identify the extent of a range of weeds and to estimate the number and distribution of the endangered Button Wrinklewort. Using the same methods it will be surveyed again in late January 2014. We want to assess the impact of five years of intensive weed control on the native vegetation and habitat. It will be very exciting to compare the changes.

The photo below shows one of the less common species of the Park, Australian Trefoil *Lotus australis*. It is where FOG and volunteers cleared dense woody weeds more than 12 months ago, and the other plants have responded as hoped.

We are asking for volunteers to help with the surveys, which will start on 20 January. You don't need to have any particular skills, as it is easy to learn how to do it. Our intention is to survey each morning from 8.00 am to noon (to avoid the worst of the heat). It is expected to take about five mornings, depending on how many volunteers we get. You may volunteer for as little as one morning, or for more.

For more information, and/or to register your interest, please contact Sarah Sharp sarah.sharp@fog.org.au.

Welcome to new members

We extend a warm welcome to the following new members who joined FOG in 2013:

Rob Armstrong (Amaroo, ACT);
Linda Bradburn (West Preston, Vic.);
William Byrne (Carnegie, Vic.);
Sue Cannon (Yarralumla, ACT);
Margaret and Ron Chapman (Yarralumla, ACT);
Judith Gamper (Kambah, ACT);
Katriona Hopkins (Flinders Is., Tas.);
David Johnson (Canberra, ACT);
Michael Lewis (Yarralumla, ACT);
Helen McAuley (Yarralumla, ACT);
Vincent and Judy McMahan (Yarralumla, ACT);
Helga and David Mossop (O'Connor, ACT);
Lesley Peden (Page, ACT);
Melissa Snape (Crestwood, NSW);
Ian Taylor (The Rock, NSW);
Ros Wallace (Watson, ACT); and
Christopher Watson (Camberay, NSW).

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Photo: Australian Trefoil *Lotus australis* var. *australis* in glorious flower in Stirling Park in early December 2013. The population is quite small (c. 30 plants) but hopefully, from the numbers of seedlings and seed pods, they are on the increase (John Fitz Gerald).



News Roundup

Murrumbidgee to Googong pipeline

Naarilla Hirsch

ACTEW's Murrumbidgee to Googong pipeline project has been required under the EPBC Act to rehabilitate the pipeline corridor, and to improve an offset block near Williamsdale. ACTEW has been discussing this with the community in part through an Environment Reference Group, on which Tony Lawson and I represent FOG. On Friday 25 October, ACTEW took this group plus FOG president, Sarah Sharp, to visit first the rehabilitation work and then the offset block.

The section of pipeline close to Angle Crossing traverses higher quality native grassland. Seed of local native grasses and forbs had been sown here. It was apparent that the vegetation along the disturbed pipeline had a higher exotic load than the surrounding less disturbed grassland. Closer inspection revealed a number of native grasses and forbs in the rehabilitated area, including Common Woodruff *Asperula conferta*, a Speargrass *Austrostipa* sp., Redleg Grass *Bothriochloa macra*, Yellow Buttons *Chrysocephalum apiculatum*, Bear's Ears *Cymbonotus lawsonianus* and a Wallaby Grass *Rytidosperma* (formerly *Austrodanthonia*) sp.. Monitoring has recorded all the species sown in the rehabilitated areas, but so far the cover of each is disappointingly low, except in a low-lying damper patch where *Juncus* and *Lomandra* species were doing well. However, as the experience of STEP has shown, it can be some time before the full effects of native seed sowing become apparent. ACTEW intends to continue to monitor the rehabilitation work and to control St John's Wort, so future seasons should see an improvement in native cover. A highlight was the Short-beaked Echidna nestled in a patch of Yellow Buttons.

At the offset block south of Williamsdale, the ground cover was much denser than a couple of years ago, and the trees appeared healthier. As well, ACTEW's spraying of the woody weeds has had a big impact. Some were regenerating, but ACTEW intends to continue this spraying for two more seasons. There were a few exotics, but most of the ground cover was native and some species were in flower. We were particularly pleased to find Silky Swainson Pea *Swainsona sericea* (vulnerable in NSW,) Yam Daisy *Microseris* sp., and orchids including a *Diuris* sp. and a Sun Orchid *Thelymitra* sp.. These all indicate the high quality of this vegetation. Other conspicuous native species included Early Nancy *Wurmbea dioica* ssp. *dioica*, Blue Devil *Eryngium ovinum*, Common Woodruff, Bear's Ears, Common Sunray *Triptilodiscus pygmaeus*, Creamy Candles *Stackhousia monogyna*, Australian Bindweed *Convolvulus angustissimus* ssp. *angustissimus*, Variable Billy Buttons *Craspedia variabilis*, a Speedwell *Veronica* sp., Variable Plantain *Plantago varia* and at least two Bluebell species *Wahlenbergia* spp.. In the area dominated by Broad-leaved Peppermint *Eucalyptus dives* and other eucalypts, we

noticed Hoary Guineaflower *Hibbertia obtusifolia*, Curved Riceflower *Pimelea curviflora* var. *sericea*, Austral Bugle *Ajuga australis*, Urn Heath *Melichrus urceolatus*, a *Pomaderris* sp. and Heathy Bushpea *Pultenaea procumbens*.

The endangered Small Purple Pea *Swainsona recta* was propagated at the ANBG, and planted in this offset in three enclosure plots fenced to exclude grazers, mainly kangaroos and goats. There are not many rabbits here. The contrast between the taller and denser vegetation inside the enclosures and the more heavily grazed vegetation outside was quite apparent (see photo below). All the seedlings planted in 2012 had survived. Most had already flowered and were setting seed. Those planted in 2013 were not doing as well: some were flowering, but others were clearly struggling. Probably the 'water crystals' added at planting had, when they expanded, cracked the soil, disturbing the seedlings and sometimes exposing their roots.

ACTEW is continuing to work on improving the quality of this offset, mostly by spraying weeds and removing feral animals such as pigs. They are also continuing to monitor both the rehabilitation work and the offset block. We were pleased to be able to see the improved condition of this offset and to enjoy the spring flowering.



Photo: Murrumbidgee to Googong offset south of Williamsdale. Small Purple Pea has been planted in three enclosures, to protect them from the herbivores whose grazing is apparent outside this enclosure (Sarah Sharp).

News Roundup (cont.)

FOG thanks the National Capital Authority for grasslands conservation

Jamie Pittock

On 3 November 2013 an unusual mutual admiration society sprang up at Yarramundi Reach grasslands in Acton on the occasion of FOG's 46th work party on national lands since 2009. Mr Andrew Smith, acting Chief Executive of the National Capital Authority (NCA) joined FOG volunteers at the work party. FOG publicly thanked the NCA for its efforts to conserve grassy ecosystems on its estate, while Mr Smith on behalf of the NCA thanked FOG and its volunteers for "invaluable support over the years" and for all of our work to conserve natural heritage values on its lands.

Yarramundi Reach is 23 ha of national land which was retained by the Commonwealth Government at the time of ACT self-government. Much of it is of high conservation value as habitat for threatened species and ecological communities. It contains a remnant of Natural Temperate Grassland, which is listed under ACT and federal environmental laws as an endangered ecological community. It includes one of the few remnants of "Wet *Poa* Tussock Grassland" remaining in the ACT. Threatened species recorded there include Striped Legless Lizard and Perunga Grasshopper. Yarramundi Reach is also renowned for its wildflower displays in spring and summer, including of the Blue Devil and Bulbine Lily.

Under the National Capital Plan, Yarramundi Reach was zoned for 'national capital purposes' and suggested as the original site for the National Museum (since built on Acton Peninsula). In recognition of its high natural heritage values, following public consultation and with FOG's support, under Amendment 80 the NCA rezoned Yarramundi Reach as 'open space' in the National Capital Plan in July 2013. This protection of the grasslands from development is most welcome.

The reservation of Yarramundi Reach grasslands as open space complements and enriches adjoining public land uses, including the lake and two arboreta, the new National Rock Garden, the Black Mountain section of Canberra Nature Park and the Australian National Botanic Gardens. Friends of Grasslands' (FOG) volunteer conservation work at Yarramundi Reach commenced in 2009 under an agreement with the NCA, and with consultation and support from the Ngamberi Aboriginal community. The work has focussed on removal of woody weeds (including Blackberry and Cootamundra Wattle, now largely complete), spraying highly invasive exotic grasses (mainly Chilean Needlegrass and African Lovegrass) and St John's Wort, and re-establishing

indigenous grasses and herbs in disturbed areas. Between 2009 and September 2013 at Yarramundi Reach, FOG has undertaken ten work parties on national lands, including 658 volunteer hours work and removal of 50 m³ of weed material. Many FOG volunteers have come from The Australian National University.

The FOG-NCA partnership has attracted significant additional funding and support for weed control and the reintroduction of wildflower species at Yarramundi Reach with support from the ACT and federal governments' environmental programs, as well as from Greening Australia. Most recently the ACT Natural Resource Management Council and Government awarded FOG \$17,000 for weed control on national lands.

Since 2009, in addition to supporting FOG's work, the NCA has enhanced their management of Yarramundi Reach grasslands by:

- Adopting a conservation management plan;
- Reinstating patch burning to enhance the ecology and reduce wildfire risk;
- Increasing weed control;
- Fencing the site to exclude illegal vehicle entry.

Ongoing management challenges include controlling weeds, reinstating indigenous plants on disturbed lands, maintaining patch burning, and preventing illegal vehicle entry and rubbish dumping.

FOG-NCA partnership

FOG and the NCA agreed on a partnership in 2009. This was renewed in July 2013 and focusses on conservation of grasslands and woodlands at Scrivener's Hut, Stirling Park and Yarramundi Reach. Between 2009 and December 2013, FOG has undertaken 49 work parties on national lands, including over 3,600 volunteer-hours worked and removal of over 2,750 m³ of weed material.

Under the agreement, FOG undertakes voluntary work on national lands to conserve flora and fauna, and the NCA seeks conservation advice from FOG, and funds FOG's field equipment and volunteer safety measures (about \$6,000 per year).

FOG and Mr Smith also acknowledged that from time to time our organisations have different views on land use, for instance, over the option to site a new Prime Minister's Lodge at Attunga Point below Stirling Park. FOG is advocating reservation of Attunga Point and Stirling Park for nature conservation.

News Roundup (cont.)

Hall Cemetery

John Fitz Gerald

On 9 November 2013, despite a wet forecast, five volunteers gathered at Hall. Most effort went to cutting and dabbing woody stems, especially tiny Briars. St Johns Wort, Cleavers, thistles and exotic grasses were sprayed. Finally the planned garden plot near the Cemetery gate was treated by some physical removal and a little spraying. We have missed Andy & Janet Russell and look forward to them rejoining us with renewed energy in 2014. All offers to join in the effort will be received enthusiastically.

Martin Butterfield's COG (Canberra Ornithologists Group) outing on 20 November included a brief foray into Hall Cemetery. Martin recorded a Dollar Bird seen disappearing into a hole in the north woodland, but he could not confirm that it was nesting. If you would like to read more, his excellent blog is at <http://franmart.blogspot.com.au/2013/11/cog-gets-big-hall-of-breeding-records.html>.

The Poplars Queanbeyan field trip

Naarilla Hirsch

On 23 November 2013, a group of nine joined Tom Baker from Queanbeyan Landcare on a sunny Saturday morning to look at the grassland and grassy woodland on *The Poplars*. This is a privately owned property, west of Jerrabomberra and south of Queanbeyan Cemetery. *The Poplars* is an iconic site for FOG, as shortly after FOG was established 19 years ago, the then president Edwina Barton spent an enormous amount of time and energy presenting the case for conservation of the high quality grasslands there at a hearing on the rezoning of the area under the NSW *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act*. Some of this area is now zoned for environmental protection, in part due to its proximity to Canberra airport flight paths and consequent aircraft noise. As yet, it remains in private hands.

Tom and others from Queanbeyan Landcare, under an agreement with the landowner, have spent much time and effort over the last six years tackling weeds such as St John's Wort and Serrated Tussock. The first section we visited showed the results of that work, and is very diverse. There was a healthy Button Wrinklewort *Rutidosis leptorrhynchoides* population with recruitment occurring, other daisies, and a lovely patch of Blue Devil *Eryngium ovinum* in flower (see photo p. 1). Grasses recorded included Speargrasses *Austrostipa* spp., *Poa* sp., Wallaby Grasses *Rytidosperma* (syn. *Austrodanthonia*) spp. and Common Wheatgrass *Anthosachne scabra* (syn. *Elymus scaber* var. *scaber*) but surprisingly, no Kangaroo Grass *Themeda triandra*. The grassland was bounded on one side by Fan Grevillea *Grevillea ramosissima*, Kurrajong *Brachychiton populneus* ssp. *populneus*, Early Wattle

Acacia genistifolia and Golden Wattle *Acacia pycnantha* (Australia's floral emblem).

The other grassland we visited had more weeds, in part because less control has been done. Some of the mature Blakely's Red Gum *Eucalyptus blakelyi* had died, possibly because of spray drift a few years ago. However, extensive regeneration was occurring.

There are significant management issues: as well as the weediness, there is stormwater run-off from the adjoining suburb. The drainage lines beside the high quality areas were full of woody weeds such as Blackberry **Rubus fruticosus* and Privet *Ligustrum* spp.. As well, a huge informal BMX track has been constructed along one of the drainage lines, with ramps of clay over 2 m tall.

The quality of the grassland and of the work being done by Queanbeyan Landcare is such that FOG is considering how we might assist in preserving it.

Scrivener's Hut Working Bee

John Fitz Gerald

On 7 December 2013, seven volunteers continued weed control in this lovely but little visited woodland, in central Canberra alongside our Federal Parliament.

The understorey was looking fine, including the several healthy patches of Button Wrinklewort. Woody weeds tackled by cutting and dabbing included abundant *Berberis aquifolium* and a small patch with Cotoneaster, Ash, Firethorn and other exotic species. Herbicide was sprayed on abundant St John's Wort and disappointingly resurgent Blackberry.

A revisit will be required early in 2014 to keep on top of these problems and to finish the control of *Acacia baileyana*.

New Grass Identification Book

NSW DPI has recently published *Grasses of the NSW Tablelands*.

It is available online for \$20.00 from dpi.nsw.gov.au/aboutus/resources/bookshop/agguide-grasses-of-the-nsw-tablelands.

News Roundup (cont.)

Web bits

Centenary Bioblitz: grassland survey

Naarilla Hirsch

On 26 October 2013, Sarah Sharp led a group of 12 (FOG members and others) to survey the grassland patches in the south-western corner of Black Mountain Nature Reserve. This was part of the ACT Centenary Bioblitz.

Most of the group did a detailed survey of a 400 m² plot in the more easterly grassland, by moving in strips across the plot and recording all species observed. The rest of the group did a more general survey outside the plot.

Outside the plot, 62 species were recorded compared with 61 inside, but 18 of those found in the plot were not recorded outside. While some of these may have been present only inside the plot, it is more likely that the more detailed search there revealed species not easily observed by the general walk-around.

Finally, we did a general survey of the westerly grassland patch, and recorded 72 species. On the way back, on the verge of the woodland, we found three rare species, Twining Fringed Lily *Thysanotus patersonii*, Yam Daisy *Microseris* sp. and Hornet Orchid *Diuris sulphurea*.

The data will be entered into the *Atlas of Living Australia*. A copy of the spreadsheet can be obtained from Sarah Sharp sarah.sharp@fog.org.au.

Native grassland sites sought by researcher

Chris Watson is from the University of Technology Sydney. His supervisor is Professor Alfredo Huete cfsites1.uts.edu.au/science/staff/details.cfm?StaffId=9984. Chris is looking for temperate grasslands suitable for his research into the link between remote sensing or satellite imagery estimates of grassland productivity, and productivity as measured on the ground.

Chris plans to access each location for about two hours every month for the next two years, at the owner's convenience. Property details could be kept confidential to protect the privacy of the owner.

If you would like more information, please contact Chris on 0499 238 308 or Christopher.watson-3@uts.edu.au.

The Extent and Significance of Gungahlin's Biodiversity Values

This excellent report by Michael Mulvaney from the Policy Division of ACT Conservation Planning and Research is available at

www.environment.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/258019/Gungahlin_Biodiversity_KF-MM_final_version.pdf.

Agricultural benefits of native grasslands

Dr Sandra Lavorel from the Université Joseph Fourier in Grenoble visited CSIRO last November and gave a talk on the responses of native grasses and grasslands to climate change:

www.canberratimes.com.au/act-news/graziers-warned-climate-change-costly-20131126-2y8hs.html.

New Newsletter editor

We are delighted to announce that Ann Milligan will edit future Newsletters. Ann is not only a FOG member but also a professional editor, so some of the quainter idiosyncracies of the past year should quietly disappear.

For the main articles in this issue, Ann agreed that we should reduce the font size to 11 and suggested using Gill Sans rather than Times New Roman. Please let her know what you think.

It has been my habit to use the ACT Census of the Vascular Plants... Version 3.0 www.anbg.gov.au/cpbr/ACT-census-2012/ for both scientific and common names, and (as the ACT Census does) to capitalise common names on the basis that they are proper nouns. For ex-ACT species I have used the Australian Plant Census which is 'under development' www.anbg.gov.au/chah/apc/ or PlantNET plantnet.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/search/simple.htm.

Please place draft material on the Dropbox and notify Ann, or else email it to her at newsletter@fog.org.au.

Sincere thanks from Isobel to all those who have contributed material and proof-read so diligently.

My Impressions of Melbourne Grasslands

Geoff Robertson

I was one of twelve from the Canberra region to visit Melbourne on 6–7 November 2013 for the ‘Victorian Native Grassland Tour’ organised by the Myer Grassland Project, in which Kosciuszko to Coast (K2C) is one of four partners. Earlier in 2013, K2C had hosted a visit to Canberra by the three Victorian partners and the Myer Foundation’s Environment and Sustainability Committee (E&SC) to show and discuss Canberra and Queanbeyan Grasslands. More recently, Karen Reid from the University of Melbourne had visited Canberra to gather material for her chapter in a grassland management book, another aim of the project.

We visited six Melbourne grasslands and attended a forum. Many people participated, including four from the Myer Foundation, six from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Australian Research Centre for Urban Ecology (ARCUE), three from RMIT, two from Melbourne University and John Morgan (La Trobe University) and Ian Lunt (Charles Sturt University). The contingent from Canberra represented eight agencies, organisations and consultancies. We were joined by more people from local groups or agencies who manage the sites. Some additional people came to the forum.

Most of the Canberra contingent missed the first site at Iramoo Wildflower Garden Reserve at Cairnlea, hosted by Friends of Iramoo. Our first site was a grassland reserve at Mt. Derrimut. A lasting impression of this site was the somewhat expensive fence which was code for keep out. Close outside the fence on three sides were recently built houses. The Kangaroo Grass was thigh high and the grassland appeared to be good quality. Like many new grassland reserves in the emerging north-western Melbourne suburbs, the developer, as an offset, had been required to install the fencing and other infrastructure and to pay for management (weeding etc.) for ten years. These reserves are controlled by local councils, sometimes in partnership with ‘friends of’ community groups.

Our next stop was the Truganina Cemetery, a small quiet rural cemetery, rapidly being encroached on by the suburbs. It was a delightful site and various people including John and Ian talked about its discovery and the history of the evolution of grassland reserves as the suburbs expanded.

After an excellent lunch at Melbourne University, 60 people attended the forum. Mark McDonnell (ARCUE) provided some background to the project and the discussions with Myer. David Sherlmerdine (E&SC) described why Myer had funded the project and their positive impressions thus far. The presentations either set the context or described progress to date. Those that stood out for me were by John Morgan and Ian Lunt, on the various historical phases of

grassland conservation in south-east Australia and the important role played by suburban grassland reserves in conserving grassland biodiversity, and by Dave Kendall on the different philosophies and strategies adopted by different managers (Parks Victoria, local councils, and community groups). There were many opportunities to discuss broad objectives and technical detail.

The following morning we visited three sites: Ngarri-djarrang Central Creek Grassland at Reservoir (hosted by Meg Maroney, Merri Creek Management Committee), Malcolm Creek Grasslands at Craigieburn (hosted by the Bush Management Team of Hume City Council), and Evans Street Grasslands Sunbury (hosted by Damien Harrison also Hume City Council). Each had many biodiversity assets. Evans Street was a standout for its floral display.

Each grassland is actively managed: Ngarri-djarrang by a community group and Craigieburn and Sunbury by bush-management teams. In each instance management was well-directed and implemented, although there were concerns about the level of resources and sometimes their uncertain future. It was a great opportunity not only to gain an appreciation of the biodiversity of these grasslands but also to discuss management and community engagement, and to discover how bush management teams work in practice.

This was followed by an enjoyable pub lunch and for most of the Canberra mob, a flight home. The visit was well organised: a big thanks to the large team who arranged it. From the Canberra end, Kathryn Wells arranged things without muss or fuss and reported on the K2C Grassland Project. Congratulations Kathryn.

Biodiversity of the Western Volcanic Plains Flora and Fauna Field Guide.

This iOS app by the Ecolinc Science and Technology Innovations Centre describes more than 160 animal and 250 plant species. Version 1.1.0 is now available gratis from itunes.apple.com/us/app/biodiversity-western-volcanic/id653258339.

Another version is in production. It will cover the flora of the grasslands of south-eastern Australia.

The Ecolinc site is well worth visiting too: bwvp.ecolinc.vic.edu.au.

The Garden that Keeps On Giving

Janet Russell

The management of our Aranda ACT garden has settled into a steady rhythm in which we try either new species or more individuals of the same species in order to increase the number of species that will naturalise. We also review how we can cultivate healthy specimens of some other species so that they persist as well as look attractive during their allotted life span. This may involve a rethink about where to plant them and/or how to manage them differently.

After the neglect of the garden over winter, the first job was disposing of the annual weeds. It was also a time to inspect closely the volunteer seedlings to make sure that we were not inadvertently pulling up something that we would like to foster. Damp spots are sought after and as many as four wildflower seeds may germinate within 5 cm of each other. We had a number of new weeds appear including a delicate little plant identified as Annual Pearlwort *Sagina apetala*. A Vetch *Vicia* sp. and Cleavers *Galium aparine* have also appeared for the first time this year. We suspect that we may have brought the vetch in on our clothes or shoes from Hall Cemetery. It is easy to see from the local neighbourhood where the Cleavers came from.

Native Pelargonium *Pelargonium australe*, Native Geranium *Geranium solanderi* var. *solanderi*, and the Magenta Storksbill *Pelargonium rodneyanum* are our latest successes. They each produce an embarrassment of riches. It is not only flowers that make some plants attractive: in early spring the Native Pelargonium leaves have autumnal colours of red and yellow. The deep pink of the Magenta Storksbill is a welcome addition to a colour palette often dominated by yellow and white from the various Paper Daisies. The Wild Flax *Linum marginale* has sprung up. It is tall and rangy further up the block, while the specimens closest to the road, where conditions are harsher, are shorter and more likely to be multi-stemmed. The twelve or so seedlings I originally planted disappeared after the first season and some two or three years later have re-appeared. I find it interesting that the seeds of this species do not seem to germinate close to each other. So the Wild Flax is now well-spaced over the block, unlike the Paper Daisies and Bluebells *Wahlenbergia* sp. which germinate readily and form mass flowerings (see photo).

Stinking Pennywort *Hydrocotyle laxiflora* and Kidney Weed *Dichondra repens* have migrated to obviously more preferred spots. So the Pennywort is moving into drier areas, and the Kidney Weed to damper spots. It has clustered around the outfall from one of the swales as well as colonising the east-facing bank of the swale where it is protected from the westerly sun.

Encouraging the species that do not thrive is an ongoing project that needs more research. I had not realised how quickly I had come to view as normal these few atypically wet seasons which we have had recently. By comparison, the weather is now quite harsh. Even the volunteer native colonisers such as the Cudweeds *Euchiton* spp. are struggling. Our prolifically seeding plants maintain colour in the garden while we work hard to keep the more sensitive plants alive.

Photo: Mass flowering at Janet and Andy Russell's beautifully designed and cared for Aranda garden: Golden Everlasting *Xerochrysum bracteatum* (left and foreground) with Bluebells *Wahlenbergia* sp. and Hoary Sunray *Leucochrysum albicans* ssp. *albicans* (right and foreground) and the white-flowered *Rhodanthe anthemoides* and Rock Lily *Bulbine glauca* (centre rear) (Janet Russell).



FOG AGM 2013 Reports, March 2013

Hall Cemetery

Janet Russell

Andy Russell managed four official working bees. The main activities were grubbing out eucalypts and weeding the Yellow Box-Red Gum grassy woodland.

This year we focused more on the north side, which has a different mix of weeds such as Deadly Nightshade, the garden escape *Potentilla recta*, Fleabane and Spear Thistles. A Vetch has also taken hold and been hard to remove. At the last working bee, mature pods were removed to slow the spread. Yorkshire Fog and Sweet Vernal Grass have spread throughout the site, including the north-eastern corner of the cemetery proper. At our last working bee, no work had been done on it and there seems to be no satisfactory way to tackle it.

Individuals were on site for a variety of reasons and carried out a range of other work as small groups or alone. A significant amount of whipper-snipping has been done near the front gate. This is a particularly grassy weed area but this work has been also done with a view to beautifying the area near the front gate, to try to discourage the dumping of rubbish outside the gate, which has been very disappointing.

A grand effort was made and 110 person hours of general maintenance were done. Grateful thanks to all the willing workers

Andy and Janet Russell indicated their wish to step down from organising the working bees after May 2013.

Old Cooma Common Grassland Reserve

Margaret Ning and David Eddy

We held two one-day working bees in February and November 2012, and a three-day one with boom spraying in January 2013. For two of these we borrowed Cooma-Monaro Shire Council's wonderful weed spraying trailer, with three hoses and reels on a 400 L spray tank; magnificent! Some time back, FOG received an Environmental Trust grant to facilitate the use of strategic grazing on the Common. But fencing the reserve into several paddocks and introducing grazing have been postponed until we gain formal approval to graze the reserve with livestock. The committee has met four times and ensured that some progress has been made towards the proposed grant outcomes. NSW OEH has given in-principle approval for strategic conservation grazing of the reserve, subject to agreement on a management plan recently submitted. We hope that approval will be given in the next few months and that things will then happen quickly.

In February 2013 FOG was very pleased to be granted \$4000 by NSW Crown Lands Department for continued weed control. This will be a great contribution to the significant costs of the annual efforts. Cooma-Monaro Shire Council will continue its valuable support by donating some chemicals for next season.

Many thanks to volunteers who have worked at the Reserve, and hopefully in advance for future volunteer hours! We plan to make future volunteer time more effective by either using Council's spray trailer on the St John's Wort and other high priority targets, and/or cutting and dabbing *Verbascum* spikes at a better time of the year, probably late December. If strategic grazing is successfully introduced, less chemical weed control should be required.

Bush on the Boundary Molonglo

Sarah Sharp

The group met every 2 months in 2012. Members include Molonglo Catchment Group, Conservation Council, FOG, STEP, LDA, Parks and Conservation Service and several researchers from ANU. Together with BoB Gungahlin, members developed a set of protocols and principles to define the role of the groups. Issues discussed included protection and management of the area adjacent to Coombs (with work on weed control having commenced in the corridor north-east of Coombs), housing protocols for retention of solar access for all residences and planting lists. Several PhD projects are being undertaken: one funded by LDA is looking at tree hollows and how mature trees will be retained in urban areas, and another on the social aspects of retention of conservation values in the urban interface. Two field trips were organised: to Coombs and Wright, and to Misery Point and what we hope will become Barrer Hill, in memory of Peter Barrer, who undertook detailed surveys of the area in the 1980s. The latter area will be subject to an extensive restoration project, as part of the Molonglo development.

FOG AGM 2013 Reports, March 2013

Conservation Council Biodiversity Working Group

Sarah Sharp

Priority concerns addressed included:

- The ACT government election 'asks' (particularly: protecting box-gum woodland in Kinlyside and Throsby to ensure connectivity with existing reserves; creation of a single Biodiversity Conservation Service; and increase biodiversity funding by 5% annually for the next four years).
- Planning strategy for North Gungahlin, together with the LDA and Planning Authority.
- Response to the draft ACT Nature Conservation Strategy.
- Management of the river corridor at Coombs (particularly relating to actions being undertaken before the Plan of Management is prepared).

The GIS mapping facility at the Conservation Council is up and running. FOG members were trained, and Naarilla is using it.

BWG submissions are listed in the Advocacy Group report in the November–December 2013 Newsletter.

Scottsdale Monitoring

Linda Spinaze

Scottsdale Monitoring was on October 17 2012. The 8 volunteers split into 3 groups to monitor the variably-grazed areas, the non-grazed areas and the species in a 20 m x 20 m plot in the grazed areas.

Woodlands Restoration Group

Sarah Sharp

There were no meetings of the steering group for the Woodlands Restoration Program or communication with the steering group in 2012. However, much on-ground work was done by Greening Australia under contract to the ACT Government. The program was undertaken in the south-west Belconnen area, particularly increasing the bushland links to the Molonglo River. Plantings were made at Mt Painter Nature Reserve, Bindubi Street, South Pinnacle (south of the Nature Reserve) and around the east and west dams at Kama Nature Reserve (138 ha in total). Enhancement works, including assisted natural regeneration, enhancement planting and provision of woody debris, were undertaken at Cook Horse Paddocks and South Pinnacle (110 ha). This was achieved through five community volunteer events. Three sites are being monitored. Plans are being developed for planting in the Majura Valley.

BoB Gungahlin

Tony Lawson

FOG has been represented on the Gungahlin Bush on the Boundary group for several years. The main focus has been on Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve. On that issue it worked well and chalked up some significant achievements. More recently the focus has widened to other boundary issues associated with the development of North Gungahlin. At the same time there has been a significant diminution of involvement by many of the original partners. Currently it differs little from a meeting of the Conservation Council's Biodiversity Working Group.

Has BoB Gungahlin outlived its usefulness? 'Yes' in terms of the involvement of a wide range of community groups, the ACT Government - as researcher, land manager and developer, private developers, academia and science. 'No' in terms of the significant issues that still need to be resolved.

It should be noted that BoB Gungahlin has always concentrated on new developments and boundary issues. The management of the grassland reserves in Gungahlin is outside its brief.

Both BoB Gungahlin and BoB Molonglo are currently reviewing their operations.

Wire Lily *Laxmannia gracilis*: a plant worthy of respect

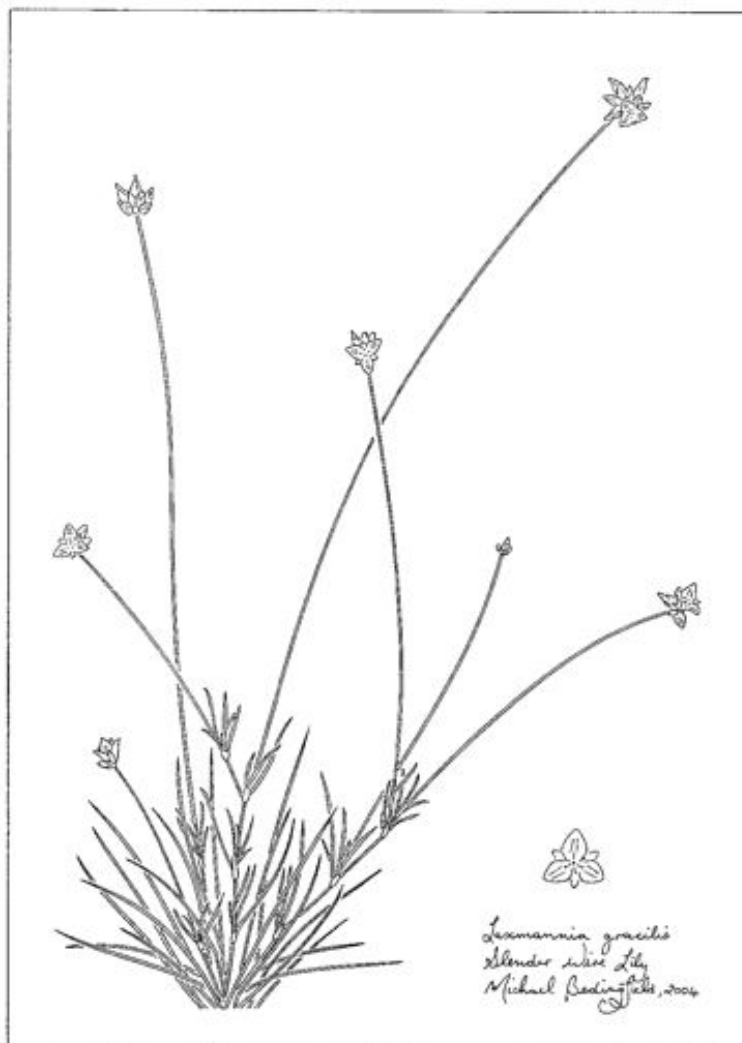
Michael Bedingfield

Educators say that when learning about a particular subject, the more you engage with the subject, the more you learn. My way of learning about plants has been to walk in the local natural areas regularly and in all seasons, and by drawing them. To draw a plant I have to know where it grows and when it prefers to flower. I learn about its growth habit and its appearance in detail. I have found this to be a very rewarding pastime, and a way of connecting with nature in an intimate way. When I draw a plant, I feel a lot of respect and affection for it, and the more so for the rare and special ones, such as the Wire Lily. Drawing an animal brings the same rewards.

So I enjoyed reading the book by David Suzuki (with Amanda McConnell) entitled *The Sacred Balance, Rediscovering our Place in Nature* (1999). His simple definition of sacred is “worthy of reverence and respect”. He talks about the importance of our relationship with nature and natural things. Love of nature is part of that relationship. Just as love, compassion and cooperation are the basis for good human relationships and community, they also work best for our living with the natural world. He talks about “the interconnectedness of all life” and the importance of our recognising that we are an integral part of nature, not separate from it. We are kin to the plants and animals with which we share this planet. He thinks we emphasise economic goals too much, at the expense of our own happiness and the welfare of our fellow creatures. Living in harmony with nature is essential. Our love and respect for wild things is an important part of this harmony. Maintaining the sacred balance implies living in a way that the natural systems continue to flourish, and nourish and support us, as well as supporting all other living things. He writes quite passionately, and goes into great detail, with much use of science, philosophy, poetry and argument, to present his case.

The Wire Lily has declined in number, and if the trend continues, it may be in need of more compassion in the future. Like most lilies, it doesn't cope well with grazing and trampling by hoofed animals. The scientific name is *Laxmannia gracilis*. The generic name is after Erik Laxmann (1730-1796), a Swede who wrote about Siberian plants;

gracilis is from the Latin for slender. This plant prefers sites that are less disturbed, in grassy woodlands and open stony areas. It can be found in sandy soils and in areas that are seasonally wet. The plant is perennial, producing a small tuft of narrow, grass-like leaves. The flowers grow in tight bunches on the end of erect, thin, wiry stems up to 40 cm high. The three petals are pink to white, and up to about 10 mm across. The sepals are smaller and darker in colour. The ones I have observed are in Tuggeranong Hill Nature Reserve, and are hard to find in a dry spring, but flower well when there has been above average rainfall. They open at night, which is unusual for a grassland lily. The ones I've seen were open during the day. In New South Wales this species occurs on the coast and tablelands, and the northern parts of the slopes and plains, and in Queensland, Victoria and South Australia as well. I have provided a drawing of the above ground parts of a whole plant at about half size, with a single flower slightly bigger to show more detail.



Restoring and maintaining the sacred balance in nature requires caring for the diversity of life forms, caring for the many wonderful and mysterious plants and animals, and the ecosystems that support them. The Wire Lily is not regarded as threatened at the moment, but as one of those on the decline it needs to be recognised. Working in cooperation with nature, instead of exploiting it, and living lightly on the Earth, would hopefully help to stop the decline of it and many other wild plants. It is quite a challenge, but a worthwhile one.

FOG groups and projects

General enquiries

Contact info@fog.org.au, Sarah Sharp (0402 576 412) or Janet Russell (02 6251 8949).

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

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

Committee & correspondence The Committee organises, coordinates and monitors FOG activities. Members are Sarah Sharp (Pres.), John Fitz Gerald (Vice-Pres.) Kris Nash (Sec.), Stephen Horn (Treas.), John Buckley, Evelyn Chia, Isobel Crawford, Naarilla Hirsch, Tony Lawson, Katherina Ng, Margaret Ning, Kim Pullen, Rainer Rehwinkel and Andrew Zelnik. Andy Russell is public officer. Enquiries/correspondence: committee2@fog.org.au.

Postal address: FOG, P.O. Box 440, Jamison Centre ACT 2614.

Communication produces *News of Friends of Grasslands* and *FOG e-Bulletin*. Enquiries: newsletter@fog.org.au or ebulletin@fog.org.au.

Financial matters, excluding membership, contact stephen.horn@fog.org.au.

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

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

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

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

Media spokesperson Sarah Sharp (0402 576 412).

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. Enquiries: 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. Enquiries: tlawson@homemail.com.au.

Woodland Flora *Woodland Flora*, the sequel to the popular *Grassland Flora*, is now at advanced production stage. Enquiries: 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. Enquiries: webmanager@fog.org.au.

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