



News of Friends of Grasslands

Supporting native grassy ecosystems

ISSN 1832-6315

March–April 2014

FOG dates to note

FOG will reach its **20th anniversary in 2014**, and a number of special celebratory events and activities are being planned. They will take place throughout the year, up to the actual birthday in November (see page 3).

5–6 April: The first celebratory activity will be a relaxing weekend camping at Scottsdale, near Bredbo, NSW, on 5–6 April (details page 2).

Also

8 March, 12 April: Join our merry band in two Saturday morning workparties at Hall Cemetery, near Hall, ACT. Zombie costumes are not required for these parties. Register with john.fitzgerald@fog.org.au (more details page 2).

18 March, 5.30 pm: Apart from workparties, FOG's 20th year opens with the **Annual General Meeting** on Tuesday 18 March, at 5.30 for 6 pm. Unlike other years the meeting will be held in the rooftop area of the Lena Karmel Lodge, Barry Drive, preceded at 5.30 by drinks and nibbles, and followed by a light supper (more details are on page 2). Please RSVP to sarah.sharp@fog.org.au to assist with catering.

30 March: On Sunday 30 March, 9–12.30, Jamie Pittock will lead us to a new area of Stirling Park in Yarralumla, to restore habitat for a big population of Button Wrinklewort *Rutidosia leptorhynchoidea*. This threatened species should still be in flower at that time. Register with jamie.pittock@fog.org.au (more details page 3).

May–June: If you have **not yet renewed** your membership subscription, you will see a silver star on this newsletter, signifying that you will not receive the newsletters for May–June and beyond.

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Photos (by Geoff Robertson), from top:

Milkmaids *Burchardia umbellata* seen during the Melbourne-area grasslands visit reported in *News of FOG* January–February 2014.

Dave Eddy in grassland, evoking FOG's first 10 years (see p. 10).

Joe and Lois McAuliffes' property at Nerriga, NSW (see p. 7).

Morning tea during work at Hall Cemetery, 21 September 2013.



Coming events

Annual General Meeting 2014

Sarah Sharp, President

All members are cordially invited to attend the FOG AGM for 2014, on the rooftop of the Lena Karmel Lodge, Barry Drive, at 5.30 for 6.00 pm. This is the same building that the Conservation Council office is in. Convenient parking is across Barry Drive. To reach the rooftop, you will be met at the Lodge door and directed to the lift. If you arrive after 6 pm, you will be able to phone for someone to let you in and direct you.

You are invited to share in drinks and nibbles at 5.30–6.00 pm, and also to stay on after the AGM for a light supper.

Please RSVP to sarah.sharp@fog.org.au to assist with catering.

Members may introduce business items at our AGM. *These must be lodged in writing, one week in advance*, with FOG's secretary, and the member needs to attend the AGM to discuss their motion. (Contact membership@fog.org.au if you need to renew your membership.)

Membership matters

FOG welcomes three new members: Boronia Halstead of Downer, ACT; Brodie Ferson, a student at University of Canberra; and the Molonglo Catchment Group, based in Queanbeyan NSW, which has joined as a not-for-profit organisation.

Membership of Friends of Grasslands Inc. costs: \$20 per (calendar) year (individuals, families, not-for-profit organisations), and \$5 per year (students, concessions) or \$50 per year (corporate).

Payment can be made by EFT to BSB 633 000, A/c 124770835, adding your name in the reference/description; or by posting a cheque to PO Box 440, Jamison Centre, Macquarie ACT 2614.

A silver star on your newsletter means that we have not yet received your 2014 renewal.

Camping at Scottsdale

The first of FOG's 20-year anniversary events

Join other members of Friends of Grasslands on the weekend of 5–6 April, camping at Scottsdale, near Bredbo, NSW.

Apart from the date, few details have been set, but it is intended to be a relaxing social event, enjoying the many values of this Bush Heritage property.

Details will be distributed via FOG's e-bulletin in late March.

Meantime, please contact john.fitzgerald@fog.org.au for information, and to find out how to reach the Scottsdale property, and to register.



Weeping Grass *Microlaena stipoides* var. *stipoides* understorey in the woodland at Hall Cemetery, one of the success stories from FOG's weeding activities. Photo: Geoff Robertson, 21 September 2013

Workparties at Hall Cemetery 8 March and 12 April

John Fitz Gerald

On Saturday 8 March and Saturday 12 April, 9.00 am – 12.00 noon, we hope you will join the workparties at Hall Cemetery, Wallaroo Road, ACT. The gate is soon after the turning off the Barton Highway, on the right-hand side of Wallaroo Road.

The goal here in summertime is to continue the battle against woody weeds and exotics in the woodland area, and we may also work on any regrowth of trees in the grassland area.

Please bring gloves, hat and your favourite small cutting tool. We provide herbicide (for plants) and morning tea (for workers).

Enquiries and registration: john.fitzgerald@fog.org.au

Coming events, continued

Workparties on National Land, 2014

Jamie Pittock

On **Sunday 30 March, 9:00–12:30 pm**, we hope to see many enthusiasts at the first workparty at Stirling Park, Yarralumla ACT, for 2014.

It will be at a new location, at the northernmost point of Stirling Park, where a big population of Button Wrinklewort is in need of habitat restoration.

Meet at the car park off Alexandrina Drive, where there is a BBQ area and rusty sculpture (Blue Gum Point). Please bring drinking water, sun protection and solid footwear. If a Total Fire Ban is declared and/or the temperature is forecast to reach 35°C or more, we will cancel.

Be careful crossing Alexandrina Drive.

Planning ahead

Many volunteers have asked for more planting at Stirling Park: this year we will undertake some replanting in late winter and early spring. Workparties will alternate between Saturdays and Sundays, and the start times will change seasonally. For your diaries, the sites and planned dates are listed at right. We will publish more details nearer those dates, as usual.

Contact: jamie.pittock@fog.org.au

Stirling Park:

Weds 14 May	9:30 – 13:00
Sat 31 May	9:30 – 13:00
Weds 18 June	9:30 – 13:00
Sun 29 June	9:30 – 13:00
Weds 16 July	9:30 – 13:00
Sat 26 July	9:30 – 13:00
Weds 13 Aug	9:30 – 13:00
Sun 31 Aug	9:30 – 13:00
Weds 17 Sept	9:00 – 12:30
Sun 28 Sept	9:00 – 12:30
Weds 15 Oct	9:00 – 12:30
Sun 26 Oct	9:00 – 12:30
Weds 19 Nov	9:00 – 12:30

Yarramundi Reach:

Sat 20 Sept	8:30 – 12:00
Sat 18 Oct	8:30 – 12:00
Sat 22 Nov	8:30 – 12:00

Scrivener's Hut

Sun 30 Nov	9:00 – 12:30
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Button Wrinklewort *Rutidosia leptorhynchoidea* in restored bush habitat at Scrivener's Hut. Photos: Ann Milligan

News roundup

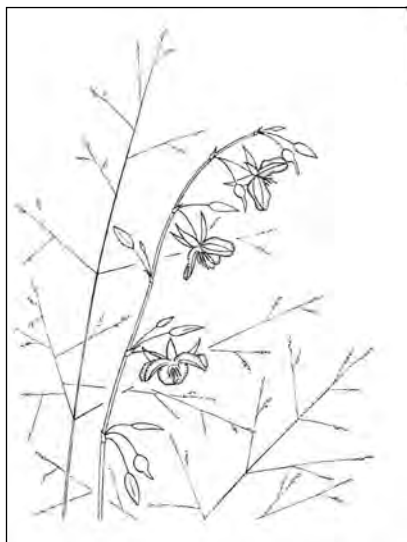
Greetings cards available from FOG

Sarah Sharp and Margaret Ning

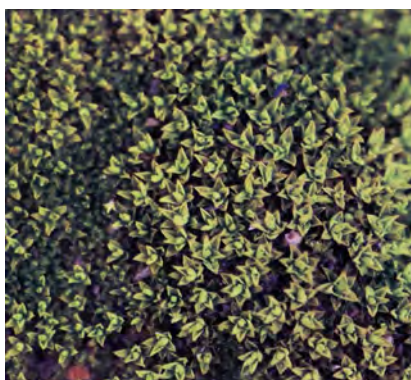
FOG has greetings cards for sale as illustrated below, thanks to Michael Bedingfield (whose drawing is card no. 1) and David Wong (who has donated cards 2–9). The cards measure approximately 10 cm x 14 cm, are blank inside, and come with envelopes. In cards 2–9 the photos are on a white background. The cards will be available singly at FOG stalls at events, or you can order them in multiples of 10 (a mixed set) by contacting booksales@fog.org.au.

Card no. 1: \$1 each, or \$10 for 10 including postage and packing.

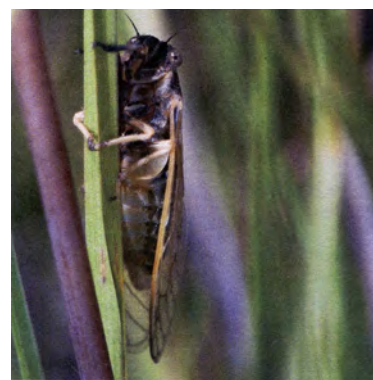
Cards 2–9: \$2.50 each, or \$20 for 10 including postage and packing.



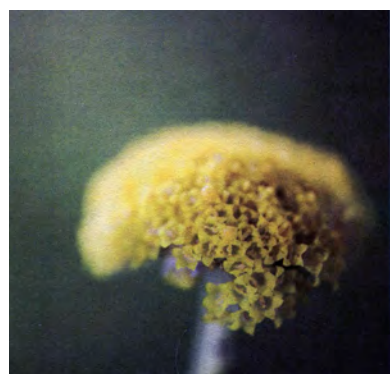
1. Nodding Chocolate Lily and Hairy Panic Grass, by Michael Bedingfield © FOG



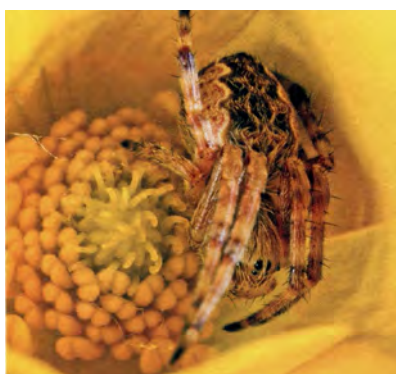
4. 'On closer inspection'
© David Wong 2010



7. 'Cicada on Kangaroo Grass'
© David Wong 2010



2. 'Billy Button' © David Wong 2010



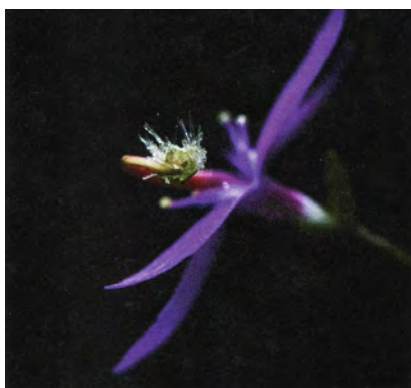
5. 'Spider in Buttercup'
© David Wong 2010



8. 'Kangaroo Grass at sunset'
© David Wong 2010



3. 'Perunga grasshopper'
© David Wong 2010



6. 'Stylidium sp. Natural ingenuity'
© David Wong 2010



9. 'Kangaroo at twilight'
© David Wong 2010

News roundup

FOG celebrates its 20-year anniversary in 2014

Sarah Sharp

On 12 November 1994, Friends of Grasslands (FOG) was launched at Yarramundi Reach. Within a fortnight there were 80 members, and since then membership has regularly exceeded 200.

During 2014 we shall be celebrating our 20th anniversary. For nearly 20 years FOG has been active in grassland advocacy, conservation, site management, provision of educational activities and extensive communication, particularly through our newsletter, website and e-bulletin. Many individuals within FOG have contributed extensively to the work of the organisation. We hope very much to see lots of our members at one or more of these planned celebratory events:

1. **'Woodland Flora' book launch** (spring 2014). Sarah Sharp, Rainer Rehwinkel, David Eddy and Dave Mallinson are currently completing the 'Woodland Flora' field guide, a companion to *Grassland Flora* (which has sold over 12,000 copies since its publication in 1997). For details of the launch, contact: isobel.crawford@fog.org.au
2. **Grasslands and other grassy ecosystems forum** (October 2014). The details and program are under preparation but the forum may cover: conservation and management of grassy ecosystems

including innovative research; community awareness and involvement; government policies and resourcing; and indigenous management. There will also be one or more day tours to some interesting local sites. Contact: sarah.sharp@fog.org.au

3. **Outings.** Several special outings are planned as part of this year's program. The first is in early April: a relaxing weekend camp at Scottsdale, as outlined on page 2. Watch the website for details of other outings. Contact: activities@fog.org.au
4. **Dinner and/or party** (November) for FOG members and associates to celebrate together. Contact: isobel.crawford@fog.org.au
5. **Booklet launch.** Once prepared, a history of FOG 1994–2014 will be launched, probably in spring. Contact: geoffrobertson@iprimus.com.au
6. **Update and enhancement of the website and newsletter** (ongoing). For more information, contact: sarah.sharp@fog.org.au

If you would like to be involved in any of these events or wish to find out more about them, email the contact address above.

Plant survey at Stirling Park; Environment Grant; and tally of workparty hours

Jamie Pittock

During January and February, FOG's President, Sarah Sharp, has coordinated a resurvey of weeds and of threatened and uncommon plants across key parts of Stirling Park in Yarralumla, ACT.

In the areas surveyed, more than 5500 plants of the endangered Button Wrinklewort *Rutidosis leptorrhynchoides*, more than 250 Burr Daisy *Calotis lappulacea*, 21 Smooth Flax Lily *Dianella longifolia* var. *longifolia*, four Wire Lily *Laxmannia gracilis* and 48 Australian Trefoil *Lotus australis* have been counted.

While the data are still being assessed, it was most pleasing to find that a number of the quarter hectare survey

quadrats were almost completely free of woody weeds following all our volunteer restoration efforts since 2009, especially at the southern end of Stirling Park. Sadly, other quadrats at the northern and eastern ends are still thick with weeds. The survey will help us target our future workparties to best effect.

Weed spraying

Thanks to an ACT Government Environment Grant of \$19,010 in 2013–14, FOG has been able to engage contractors to spray key weeds at our three work-sites on National Land. Further spraying is imminent and will be followed by replanting at some sites.

Work to date

The number of FOG workparties increased from 12 in 2012 to 16 in 2013 following the commencement of mid-monthly events in Stirling Park and increased support from residents of Yarralumla. FOG supporters contributed over 1000 hours in volunteer work in 2013, making a total of 3860 hours since 2009. Around 1200 m³ of woody weeds were cut, making a total of more than 2900 m³ since 2009. More details will be in FOG's annual report.

I look forward to seeing you at a workparty or three in the coming months. (Dates are on page 3.)

News roundup, including Advocacy

Book launch: *Field Guide to the Birds of the ACT*

Isobel Crawford

In January, Mick Gentleman MLA launched the second edition of this splendid field guide, which was published at the end of 2013 by the National Parks Association of the ACT.

The original text by McComas Taylor has been revised to include the 217 species now recorded in the ACT (and at Lakes Bathurst and George), and Nicolas Day has illustrated the several additional species recorded over the last 20 years. These new paintings are as exquisite and accurate as the earlier ones. Ian Warden interviewed Nicolas Day at the launch, as you can see at www.canberratimes.com.au.

The Field Guide is available from discerning bookshops, including The Botanical Bookshop at the Australian National Botanic Gardens, (www.botanicalbookshop.com.au). It is also available through the National Parks Association of the ACT, via www.npaact.org.au. RRP \$27.50.

Snakes Alive! January 2014



Snakes Alive!, run by the ACT Herpetological Association, involved several FOG members, including (below) ACTHA President Dennis Dyer (right) and Geoff Robertson.



Top: Two Green and Golden Bell Frogs *Litoria aurea*, 7–8 cm long, a lowland frog species from eastern NSW, where it is endangered. Below: A Black-headed Python *Aspidites melanocephalus*, a non-venomous species from arid areas in northern Australia. Photos: Ann Milligan

FOG Advocacy

Naarilla Hirsch

In October, FOG made a submission to the **ACT budget 2014–15** process. In summary, FOG made requests concerning eight issues.

1. Adequate and predictable long-term funding for implementing the strategic plans for weeds and feral pests.
2. Establishment of an expert bush regeneration team to restore our threatened grassy ecosystems.
3. Use of an environmental levy to provide sufficient resourcing for conservation.
4. Resources to ensure that recommendations on Canberra Nature Park made by the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment and agreed by Government are implemented.
5. Resources to manage conservation areas adequately and to monitor the impacts to improve management.
6. Resources to facilitate management for conservation outcomes to areas with natural values that are outside the reserve system.
7. Funding to establish and manage the natural resources that are being retained under the North Gungahlin Strategic Plan.
8. Combination of the Government's environmental arms into one directorate.

In December, TAMSD asked for public comment on its **Summary of Draft ACT Trails Strategy**.

While noting that acknowledgment is made of the need for the Trails Strategy and its implementation to remain consistent with plans of management for areas of high conservation value, FOG made a number of recommendations concerning the strategy.

Two were in line with FOG's view that urban developments and activities should not impact on high conservation areas, in particular that no recreational trails beyond existing walking tracks should be built in areas of high ecological value, and that no high impact recreational activities should be held in such areas.

With regard to the proposed scoring system in the Strategy, FOG thought that the scoring system should be modified to adequately reflect the true conservation values that may be impacted by trails, and that natural (ecological) and cultural heritage values should be scored separately.

Another concern was that monitoring should be regularly implemented and mitigation adequately resourced for all potential impacts, including weed invasion, erosion, damage to vegetation or other key habitat features, and development of unofficial tracks.

The full text of FOG submissions appears on our website: www.fog.org.au

News roundup continued

Launch of ACT Region Vegwatch Manual*

Sarah Sharp

'The Vegwatch Manual'* was launched by ACT Minister for the Environment Simon Corbell on 20 February at the Australian National Botanic Gardens. Minister Shane Rattenbury also attended, along with about 40 people from Parkcare and Landcare groups, Greening Australia, ACT and NSW government representatives and the three ACT catchment groups.

The Molonglo Catchment Group facilitated the preparation of the manual, which was revised from a monitoring manual written by Lori Gould and me and published in 2010 (called *The ACT Vegetation Monitoring Manual: a step by step guide to assessing and monitoring vegetation and habitat in grassy ecosystems*).

The Vegwatch Manual has been written and prepared to enable community volunteers to monitor and measure change in vegetation and habitat condition, with guidance from operators of the Vegwatch program.

The methods in the manual follow the approach used in Waterwatch and Frogwatch. The aim is for the data collection methods to be simple and standardised, and for the data themselves to be robust and useful



scientifically. Along with the manual, volunteers will be given training, and offered help with aspects such as species identification.

Attributes and methods are compatible with those used by the NSW Government and other studies, so data should be able to be compared across sites and localities.

Data will be collated at a central reporting hub run by the Molonglo Catchment Group, which will also be reporting the results to participants and decision makers.

The manual was received positively by the guests attending the launch.

*Full title: *ACT Region Vegwatch Manual: Vegetation and habitat condition assessment and monitoring for community (2014)*, by Sarah Sharp and Lori Gould.

For information on the Vegwatch program, or for copies of the manual, contact: coordinator@molonglocatchment.org.au, phone 02 6299 2119. The manual costs \$25 + \$5 postage as a book; or \$7 + \$3 postage as a CD. The pdf file is available for download at no cost, at www.molonglocatchment.org.au.

FOG visit to Nerriga, NSW

Geoff Robertson

On 19 and 20 October a small FOG contingent visited 'Wallabia', the property of Joe and Lois McAuliffe near the small settlement of Nerriga, between Braidwood and Nowra, NSW.

The 226 acre property is nestled in the foothills of the Northern Budawangs at 620–680 metres above sea level. Its geology is principally sandstone with some basalt and alluvial deposits. The vegetation is correspondingly varied. Wooded hills rise on most sides. Three sides of 'Wallabia' are bounded by National Park, and from many places on the property there are views of the amazing Budawangs which rise sharply from the valley floor.

'Wallabia' itself starts on the edge of farmland, cleared woodland, behind which is a small ridge of woodland, and behind that again a wonderful and extensive wetland. Lois and Joe have built a bungalow looking over the wetland towards the woodland ridge with the Budawangs beyond that. The ground was fairly wet given recent rainfall but we managed to pitch tents in suitable places.



Secondary grassland at the property of Joe and Lois McAuliffe at Nerriga. Photo: Geoff Robertson

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News roundup continued

FOG visit to Nerriga, NSW, October 2013, continued

The visit was fairly casual with several walks. The first took us to the wetland which was extensively covered by tea-tree. Joe had cleared areas to provide a mosaic of tea-tree and secondary grassland with many herbs. As is usual with FOG activities, the walk was slow, as participants got up close to the many herb species.

The walks on Saturday afternoon and Sunday were to the woodlands, and provided an opportunity for orchid spotting as well as visiting other wet areas and seeing a large number of indigenous species.

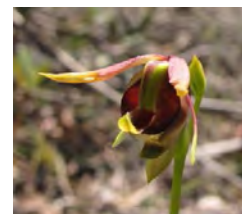
Joe and Lois are incredibly energetic and full of ideas about conservation. Joe has an extraordinary knowledge of the region's fauna and flora. Nevertheless, he has greatly appreciated visits by the Australian Native Plant Society Wednesday Walkers Group and FOG in helping develop formal plant and fauna lists.

The McAuliffes believe in proactive management of the vegetation, and in feral animal control. Joe has set up three night-movement cameras on the property, to get

an understanding of the fauna on the property and their behaviour. We had a session watching some great film. With these cameras he is observing the behaviour of visiting pigs, and establishing a program of grain-feeding and shooting to control them.

On the Saturday night we had a wonderful walk and saw many night creatures, including greater gliders.

One delightful diversion, although none was needed, was to observe Lois and Joe and their newly acquired small herd of mostly Australian Miniature Ponies. They explained that when they acquired the property they were unaware that a paddock they thought belonged to the neighbour was actually theirs. Managing that paddock led to the idea of acquiring the ponies: Lois has relatives with skills in managing these animals. Despite my general aversion to non-native animals, and horses in particular, I have always admired such miniature ponies. It was wonderful watching Lois and Joe and their careful husbandry, but the amount of intensive work associated with these animals reinforced my belief that animal care and I don't mix.



Some of the flowering plants spotted during FOG's visit to the McAuliffes' property at Nerriga.
Photos: Geoff Robertson

Photos from Melbourne grasslands visit, reported in Jan–Feb 2014 *News of FOG*

Geoff Robertson



The group at Evans Street Grasslands (Sunbury) hosted by Damien Harrison and Hume City Council.



Two flowering residents of these grasslands. The orchid (right) is a serious invader.



The group looking at attempts to reintroduce forbs into the reserves.

News from other groups

Australian Flora Foundation Call for Applications for Research Grants

Applications for grants to support original scientific projects on the biology and cultivation of Australian plants are invited from research workers in Australia. The Australian Flora Foundation will consider all relevant applications, with special interest in the following categories:

1. conservation of Australian plant diversity, particularly where there are threats from climate change;
2. the cultivation of Australian plants, to ensure their survival and reduce the threat to native ecosystems;
3. rare and endangered plants.

The Foundation expects to support between two and four projects at \$5000 – \$15,000 each, from December 2014.

Submit preliminary applications (two A4 pages) by **17 March 2014**. Shortlisted applicants will be asked to submit a full application.

For full details, and information about the Foundation, see: www.aff.org.au

SE Local Land Services Pasture Cropping Workshop, Braidwood

Tuesday 11 March, 9.30 – 4.00

'Pasture cropping' combines cropping and grazing in one land management system where each one benefits the other. The workshop will show the potential of pasture cropping to improve soil health, and the management and function of pastures, and farm profits. There will be time for discussion with key landholders using this system, and with native grasslands adviser David Eddy.

RSVP by **Wednesday 5 March**.

Details & registration: ph. 02 4842 2594
email: rebecca.bradley@lls.nsw.gov.au

'Fire management within grassland ecosystems' forum

Mawson Lakes, Adelaide, SA

Thursday 13 March, 9.00 am –
Friday 14 March, 4.30 pm (CST)

A forum to discuss the use of fire as a management tool, and burning regimes within grassland ecosystems. Participants will be fire and grassland management practitioners, researchers and ecologists whose aim is to restore and manage temperate and grassy woodland vegetation communities using fire as a restoration technique.

More information: phone 08 8406 8578
or email tcook@salisbury.sa.gov.au

To book: <http://bit.ly/1jq2OPY>

Australian Network for Plant Conservation

Workshops in the Hunter Valley, NSW

**7–8 April, Plant identification for
flora of the Hunter Valley**

**9 April, Seed collection, storage
and use for native vegetation
restoration**

Held at the Kurri Kurri TAFE campus.

10% discount if you register for both workshops. Spaces limited.

Register by Monday 31 March.

More information, and to register:
<http://bit.ly/1flc8p5>

BowerBird: a place to share & discuss biodiversity

www.bowerbird.org.au

This website invites you to use it as a socially networked biodiversity workspace, where you can add images, videos and sounds; get help with identification; create or join projects, etc. The site is sponsored by the Atlas of Living Australia, and funded by Museum Victoria.

Victorian National Parks Association

'Start with the grasslands'

**Design guidelines to support
native grasslands in urban areas**

Victoria's urban grasslands are endangered. The Victorian National Parks Association, with support from the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects, has been developing design guidelines to support native grasslands in urban areas.

The final draft of those guidelines is now available for download at:
<http://bit.ly/1dKicop>

'Wildlife habitat: threats and solutions' workshops

Womboin & Bywong, Sat 15 March

Burra & Royalla, Sat 22 March

Both workshops: 9–3.30

Members of these NSW communities can share information about local flora and fauna, identify and discuss threats and issues facing remnant wildlife habitat, and consider possible solutions, at these free workshops run by the Molonglo Catchment Group and FuturePLANS. The aim is to arrive at practical ways of dealing with the issues identified.

Morning tea and lunch are provided.
More information: <http://bit.ly/1nYa3il>

To book in with facilitator Greg Stone (essential): phone 0422 279 946 or email woodlandsenviro@gmail.com

Book by:

12 March for Womboin/Bywong,
19 March for Burra/Royalla.

National Carbon Farming Conference & Expo

17–20 March,

Canberra, Rydges Lakeside

Details:

www.carbonfarmingconference.com.au

Friends of Grasslands: the first ten years

Geoff Robertson

How shall we celebrate FOG's 20th birthday in 2014?

Thinking about this, I looked at my presentation, 'Celebrating the first ten years', given at our 10th birthday dinner (13 Nov 2004, Bungendore). In writing this piece I am reflecting on that presentation and the newsletters it recalled, hoping to stimulate some ideas about our celebration in 2014.

An image that captured the first ten years showed David Eddy standing in a colourful herbfield photographing the distant Monaro grasslands (see page 1 of this newsletter).

FOG's big bang occurred on 12 November 1994. Speakers included ACT Government Minister Bill Wood who launched FOG, and many well-known conservation celebrities, including Sarah Sharp, FOG's initiator. The front pages of early newsletters provide a sense of FOG's quick inflation led by its President, Edwina Barton, and her committee of leading Canberra conservationists. Edwina was an inspiration and a hard act to follow. A newsletter image that is a favourite of mine shows Gilmore Primary School students enjoying a grassland (pictured at right). What impact have grasslands had on them, 20 years on?

From the beginning, the *News of Friends of Grasslands* was FOG's main communication channel. Continuously since then it has advertised FOG's program, recorded FOG's story, informed and educated, emphasised science, advocated for grassy ecosystems and respected all viewpoints. In its early years the newsletter was infrequent and irregular until FOG committed to produce six copies a year on a strict timetable. By the end of 2004 there had been 38 issues. The 100th issue was produced in 2013.

Ten years ago we boasted in the newsletter that we had begun advocacy for grassy ecosystems from 'day one', and that there had been numerous submissions and consultations with governments and stakeholders since. At that time, 2004, the ACT's government's *Action Plan No. 1, Natural temperate grassland, an endangered ecological community* was central to informing FOG's advocacy.

By the end of that 10th year, FOG had conducted four major workshops, each with over 100 participants. The first of these events, 'Living Grasslands of Canberra and the South East Region', took place at the Australian National Botanic Gardens two years after FOG's launch. A FOG-committee endeavour, it was highly successful, but led to burn out. However, by late 1997 the FOG phoenix rose and FOG ran its second major workshop 'Development and Native Grasslands: Resolving the conflicts' in May 1998. Held at CSIRO in Canberra, this workshop was convened by Art Langston, FOG's third president and a philosopher, strategist and mentor for our group. Workshops in 1999 and 2000 in Queanbeyan

News of Friends of Grasslands

Volume 1 Issue 4

27 June 1995

Grassland keepers of the future ?



Lauren Scotney, Sowad Ibrahim and Charly Burt, year six students at Gilmore Primary School (ACT), relax in the school's Themeda grasslands after leading students through the grasslands to celebrate World Environment Day. [Story page 6](#)

and Cooma focused on 'Pasture Management' and 'Conservation Beyond the Reserve'. Our fifth workshop, in 2003 run jointly with Stipa Native Grasses Association, attracted 200 attendees. The proceedings of each workshop were published and hence we have a rich source of information on grassy ecosystem issues.

By 2004, trips, networking and learning were regular parts of FOG's activities program, and the newsletter carried memorable images from them. There were field trips and activities in and around Canberra: to the north; south to the Monaro; to the NSW coast; to the Hay Plain; to the Northern Tablelands; to the NSW and Victorian Alps; to NSW regional centres such as Cowra, Cootamundra, Riverina; and to Sydney and Tasmania. They combined learning and networking, and established contacts with other grassy ecosystem experts, managers and volunteers; and they included presentations to facilitate and share knowledge and insights.

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Stipa-FOG native grasses workshop, Cooma 2003.
Photo: *News of FOG*

Friends of Grasslands: the first ten years, continued

On-ground work on the Monaro was another theme in the newsletter. Articles recounted FOG's early work at Jim Ryan's property, and later our effort in the Monaro, especially at Radio Hill now named Old Cooma Common Grassland Reserve (OCCGR). A key player was David Eddy, with his vision and energy. The OCCGR working bees provided credibility for FOG and valuable experience for the many members who participated. We also worked with World Wide Fund for Nature for many years.

In 1998 FOG began offering mini-workshops to develop skills and knowledge. Topics included: grassland evaluation (1998); grassland conservation and parkcare (1999); common grass identification (2000); restoring native vegetation in the landscape (2001); learning from the landscape, with David Tongway (2002); insects, with Kim Pullen, Ted Edwards and Roger Farrow (2002, 2003); water in grassy ecosystems, with Ross Wissing (2003); cryptogams, with David Eldridge (2003); and 'fur, feather, leaf and scale' (2004). These enriched our understanding of grassy ecosystems.

Scientific study is part of FOG's repertoire, through the plant surveys we undertake in field trips and visits to members' properties. In November 2002, FOG organised the Cooma–Michalego Rail Survey with Rainer Rehwinkel. Our activities led to the discovery of a new species of leek orchid and a new population of Grassland Earless Dragon *Tympanocryptis pinguicolla*.

By its 10th birthday, FOG had had many public displays and received a reasonable degree of publicity. It was highly respected for its members' knowledge of grassy ecosystem issues and for the way it conducted itself. It had also been successful in helping to establish new groups such as St Mark's grassland group, Fisher Parkland, Monaro Grasslands Conservation Management Network (CMN), Southern Tablelands Grassy Ecosystems CMN and Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park. In 2003 FOG won the ACT Bushcare Landcare Award. In 2004, it was a finalist in the Bushcare Landcare Award. Also in 2004, I was appointed an Honorary Ambassador for ACT in recognition of my services to FOG.

At our 10-year birthday event we celebrated FOG's many active members, such as Michael Treanor, Jackie Myles, Kim Pullen, Margaret Ning, Michael Bedingfield, Rosemary Blemings, Di Chambers and Paul Hodgkinson, and we produced the 2004 Honour Roll, a list of over 280 people who had contributed significantly to FOG efforts over its first ten years. Many of these and others of FOG's early members are still strong contributors to the group as we head now towards our 20-year birthday!



Naarilla Hirsch with existing and prospective members of FOG at a southern Murrumbidgee ACT field trip, 1999.

Photo: *News of FOG*



Above: Field trip to the Hay Plain, September 2001.

Below: Moths Ted Edwards collected during one FOG workshop.

Photos: *News of FOG*



The story of *Xerochrysum bracteatum*

Janet Russell

This is the story of the journey of one of our many native plant species from Australia to Europe, and its return in a form not quite the same as when it left. The story shows what can happen when forms of species from different parts of the country are grown together in the garden. Cultivation most often leads not to conservation but instead to the creation of novel forms.

The common name used in Australia for *Xerochrysum bracteatum* is Golden Everlasting, which naturally leads to the assumption that they are all gold in colour. The name is derived from the Greek *xeros* meaning dry and *chrysos* meaning gold. A friend thought that the different coloured forms of Golden Everlastings in our garden had been bought as cultivars, but the plants are actually the result of a number of generations of hybrid crosses. The original parent plants were cultivars that were all bought at the Australian Native Plant Society's sales over a number of years. They are:

'Dargan Hill Monarch', a natural form, collected about 1.6 km inland from Cunningham's Gap in Southern Queensland,

'Cockatoo', a spontaneous hybrid between 'Dargan Hill Monarch' and a white perennial form of *X. bracteatum*,

'Princess of Wales', a spontaneous hybrid, arising from a cross between 'Dargan Hill Monarch' and an annual form arising in the Australian National Botanic Gardens,

'Diamond Head', a natural form collected around Diamond Head in New South Wales, where it is quite common on bluffs and cliffs.

We tried to grow some of the overseas-developed forms bought at a commercial nursery. They were very deeply coloured but didn't do well in our garden and didn't thrive long enough to produce any seed. However, *X. bracteatum* has been recorded hybridising with Sticky Everlasting *X. viscosum* and possibly also *Coronidium elatum*. We have had Sticky Everlasting growing for some years. Both Everlasting species have more or less naturalised here. We did have some *Coronidium elatum* too, although they did not last much more than one season. I do not think that they hybridised but I am sure that the two Everlasting species have.

Strawflower is the common name used for the Golden Everlasting in Europe. It had been introduced into England by 1781. The Frenchman who was the first to describe the species in 1803 also had an interesting connection to Napoleon's first wife. A German man developed and sold cultivars of the plants in the 1850s and these would be the antecedents of the colourful plants that are available in Australia today. It is believed that some coloured forms of South African *Helichrysum* were introduced into the breeding program, and this resulted in the huge array of colours available.

The Strawflowers are of a different form from the Australian Golden Everlastings. The bracts curl inwards, as you can see if you look at the photo in the Wikipedia article on Strawflower.

If we had known that it was likely that plants of a South African genus had been bred into the *Helichrysum bracteatum*, as it has been previously named, we would not have planted them. Most gardeners have eclectic

tastes and it was not until we thought about using more local species in our native garden that my mind turned to the significance of provenance. The genie is, however, already out of the bottle. For centuries thousands of gardeners all over the world have brought together plants with disparate origins. I sometimes wonder how it would have been to see New South Wales through Allan Cunningham's eyes.

Apart from personal experience, all other information in this article has come from a well-researched Wikipedia entry called '*Xerochrysum bracteatum*'. If you are interested in reading a more comprehensive account of the species I would commend that entry to you.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xerochrysum_bracteatum



Five photos of Golden Everlasting *Xerochrysum bracteatum* in Janet's garden

Plains Froglet *Crinia parinsignifera*, a small frog of the grassy plains

Michael Bedingfield

In any sizable expanse of grassland or grassy woodland, there will be a network of creeks and drainage lines, with boggy or swampy patches, springs, ditches, hollows and sometimes ponds or dams. These will vary in the amount of water present with the changing of the weather and seasons, sometimes very watery and wet, and at other times dry.

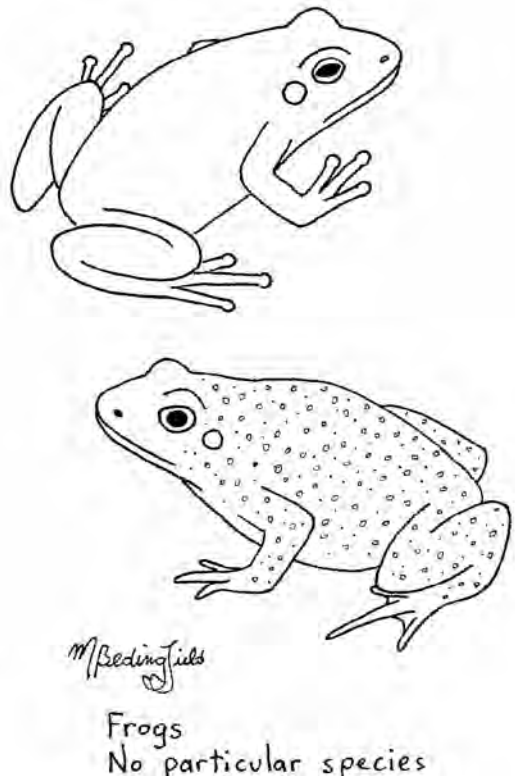
There will also be frogs present, the populations fluctuating with the conditions, though they may not be easy to find, especially when rain has been scarce. Generally frogs can only breed when there is water present, with the eggs being laid in the water. The hatchlings are tadpoles, which live and grow in the water, and eventually metamorphose into adults with lungs and legs. Then they are able to live out of the water, can lead a largely terrestrial life, and move around the landscape.

A few years ago, I participated in a Frogwatch survey with some friends at the Conder Wetlands. We had to work out what frogs were present and how many of each species. We did this by listening to the sounds made by the frogs, and trying to count how many there were for each different species. Each species has a distinctive call that we had to learn to recognise. It was a memorable experience, being near the ponds in the evening twilight listening to the cacophonous melody of the frogs. It was also very interesting and a lot of fun, recognising and counting the frogs without actually seeing them. So, although I may not have seen the several frogs whose voices I recognise, I have come to appreciate them, in particular the Plains Froglet.

I have heard the Plains Froglet many times, in a number of different places, in late winter and spring. The scientific name is *Crinia parinsignifera*. Its distinctive call is made by the male and is described as a drawn out 'wreeep' or 'eeeeeee'. You can listen to the sound at the address <http://frogs.org.au/frogs/species/Crinia/parinsignifera/>. The male calls from among vegetation or a sheltered location at the water's edge.

As its common name suggests, the Plains Froglet enjoys living on our grassy plains, and the local Limestone Plains are no exception. It occurs in grasslands, grassy woodlands, open forests, grazed paddocks, and other open disturbed areas. It will shelter among vegetation or under logs and other debris.

This frog is rather small, the adult being only 20–30 mm in length. The colour and markings are variable, the body and legs being blotchy with differing shades of grey and brown, and the belly being pale grey or off-white and speckled. Though it is not colourful, its design makes it inconspicuous in its chosen environment. The skin can be smooth or bumpy, and there is no webbing between the



toes. It is also known as the Eastern Sign-bearing Froglet and the Beeping Froglet. It occurs in eastern Australia, in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia.

Frogs generally have been declining in numbers worldwide; however, this species is holding its own. It is common throughout its range, and there are no major threats to the population.

A couple of other local frogs are worth mentioning, because their voices are distinctive and easy to recognise. These are the Pobblebonk and the Peron's Tree Frog. The Pobblebonk *Limnodynastes dumerilii* is also called the Eastern Banjo Frog. Its call is a loud 'bonk', repeated at intervals. It is a large burrowing frog, with adults being over 7 cm long. The Peron's Tree Frog *Litoria peronii* is alternatively known as the Maniacal Cackle Frog. Its voice is a long, loud, laughing, drawn out cackle, descending in tone and becoming louder. It is 4.5–7 cm long, and is an arboreal species with pads on its toes. Both their calls can be listened to at www.frogs.org.au.

I have supplied a general drawing of frogs with various features depicted; it is not meant to represent an actual species. My main reference has been the book *Reptiles and Frogs of the Australian Capital Territory* by Ross Bennett and the National Parks Association of the ACT (1997/2011), which is an excellent book on its subject. I've also used the websites www.frogs.org.au, and www.vic.waterwatch.org.au.

Contacts for FOG groups and projects

General inquiries

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

Activities organises FOG field trips, talks, workshops, on-ground work, support to other groups, property visits and FOG's calendar. *Inquiries:* activities@fog.org.au.

Advocacy prepares submissions and advocates on 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: Sarah Sharp (President), John Fitz Gerald (Vice-President), Kris Nash (Secretary), Leon Pietsch (Treasurer), Andy Russell (Public Officer), John Buckley, Evelyn Chia, Isobel Crawford, Naarilla Hirsch, Stephen Horn, Tony Lawson, Katherina Ng, Margaret Ning, Kim Pullen, Rainer Rehwinkel, Andrew Zelnik. *Inquiries or correspondence:* committee2@fog.org.au.
Postal address: PO Box 440, Jamison Centre ACT 2614.

Communication produces *FOG e-Bulletin*.
Inquiries: ebulletin@fog.org.au.

Financial matters, excluding membership.
Contact leon.pietsch@fog.org.au.

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

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

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

Hall Cemetery. FOG with ACT Government holds regular working bees to protect leek orchids and generally restore the Hall Cemetery. *Inquiries:* john.fitzgerald@fog.org.au.

Media spokesperson: Sarah Sharp (0402 576 412).

Membership: New members are welcome. We now offer membership at \$20 per year for not-for-profit organisations; there is also a new 'voluntary life membership' category. Membership forms are at the website. For inquiries, or to help with newsletter despatch, contact: membership@fog.org.au.

Newsletter: *News of Friends of Grasslands* is despatched on the fourth Tuesday of February, April, June, August, October, December. Please send photos and articles about FOG or related grassland activities before the third Tuesday of those months to the editor Ann Milligan at: newsletter@fog.org.au.

Old Cooma Common. FOG with Cooma-Monaro Shire Council, holds working bees twice yearly at the Old Cooma Common Grassland Reserve.
Inquiries: margaret.ning@fog.org.au or david.eddy@fog.org.au.

Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park (STEP). FOG helped establish STEP, a regional botanic garden and recovery centre at the National Arboretum Canberra. It showcases local ecosystems, especially native grasses and forbs.
Inquiries: info@fog.org.au

Woodland flora. The book 'Woodland Flora', a companion to the popular *Grassland Flora*, is at an advanced stage of production. *Inquiries:* sarah.sharp@fog.org.au.

Website, www.fog.org.au. The website holds information about FOG and grasslands, back issues of the newsletter, and program details. *Inquiries:* webmaster@fog.org.au.

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