



News of Friends of Grasslands

Supporting native grassy ecosystems

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November–December 2018

Calling for volunteers:

Grassland monitoring @ 'Scottsdale', 8 November

Give yourself a *treat* and volunteer to help the team monitoring changes in the grassy ecosystems on the Bush Heritage property 'Scottsdale', near Bredbo, on **Thursday 8 November**. Some experience in grassland plant ID is extremely useful, but the teams (usually 2 groups of four people) also need volunteers to hold the tape-measures, etc. Lunch is provided by Bush Heritage. Please **REGISTER by 1st November** by emailing linda.spinaze@fog.org.au, or linda@xamax.com.au. This will ensure you are included in further information and lunch.

Assistance with ACT Plant Census

Michael Mulvaney, Senior Conservation Officer with the ACT Government, is seeking assistance to ensure the *Census of ACT Vascular Plants* remains current and comprehensive. He has identified a large number of non-indigenous plants that have either not been or are only poorly collected for the herbarium and is seeking help to collect specimens of these species. To assist, collectors would need a licence which Michael is prepared to organise. To find out more, please contact Michael on Michael.Mulvaney@act.gov.au.

Please help on a FOG stall at Bush Blitz, Sunday 2 December, ANBG

We need members to tell visitors what FOG does, at our stall at the (free) **Bush Blitz community day on Sunday 2 December** at the Australian National Botanic Gardens. If you can spare 1–2 hours between 10 am & 3 pm, please contact Margaret.Ning@fog.org.au or Ann.Milligan@fog.org.au, by **Monday 26 November** so we can make up a roster. It should be a fascinating day for everyone.

At the community day for Bush Blitz (bushblitz.org.au), 'Australia's largest nature discovery program', people can learn about taxonomy, interact with Bush Blitz scientists, and *find out about local community groups adding to knowledge of Australian biodiversity*.

Wild Pollinator Count: 11–18 November

Pollinators are important in grasslands and woodlands. The twice-yearly Wild Pollinator Count project gathers information to support pollinator conservation. Pick a warm sunny day in the count week, watch a flower for 10 minutes and submit your observations online. For all information, see <https://wildpollinatorcount.com/> or email wildpollinatorcount@gmail.com.

Welcome to our new members!

Victorian Volcanic Plains Conservation Management Network, VIC

Sarah Wynn, NSW

Anthony Todd, ACT

Alice Bauer, ACT

Michael and Robin Shihoff, ACT

Three weekend adventures in November

Hunting the Monaro Golden Daisy (photo below), and visiting several areas of attractive grassland in and near Deua NP – these are two of three weekends in November/December that FOG has arranged for your interest and pleasure. Before that, a FOG group is revisiting members' property at Nerriga (last seen in February) hoping to see their interesting grassy woodland in flower.

To **register** for these November adventures (see page 2), and be sent the detailed information and maps (essential), you need to email margaret.ning@fog.org.au, very soon.



Top: Monaro Golden Daisy, late November 2017 at Old Cooma Common. Photo: Peter Milligan. Above: The Shoalhaven seen from beautiful grassland on private property to be visited on 2 December. Photo: Libby Keen.

FOG activities October, November, December 2018

Revisit Nerriga property, 9–11 November

Members of FOG and Australian Native Plant Society visited Nerriga for a fascinating weekend in February 2018 to see Lauren and Norm Booth's rare plant species. This revisit is in the hope of seeing numerous species in flower in this richly diverse woodland. For background reading, see *News of FOG* January–February and March–April 2018. Arrive on Friday 9 November or early Saturday 10 November. Leave on the Sunday. There is a comfortable camping area with facilities, and maybe a caravan or two. Bring all your own food etc. **Register very soon** with margaret.ning@fog.org.au for a map and further details and to see about using a caravan.

17–18 November: Hunting the Monaro Golden Daisy across the Monaro, southern NSW

This weekend adventure is a hunt, led by Rainer Rehwinkel and David Eddy, looking for the threatened Monaro Golden Daisy (MGD) in a range of sites across the Monaro *outside* Kosciuszko National Park. It will include a visit to the good MGD population on Old Cooma Common. The group will stay in and around Cooma overnight.

Register (essential) please with margaret.ning@fog.org.au

22 November: Flowering *Rutidosia* at Crace

This is your chance to visit the population of Button Wrinklewort *Rutidosia leptorhynchoidea* in flower at Crace Grasslands Nature Reserve in Gungahlin, **3 pm to 5 pm, Thursday 22 November**. The group will be driven in to the site, so all levels of agility are welcome! Please **register** with sarah.sharp@fog.org.au by **19 November**, and meet at the corner of Bellenden & Hoskins Sts in Mitchell, accessed off Sandford St, at **3 pm on 22 November**.

Crace grassland in northern Canberra is to your right when you drive towards Mitchell along the Gungahlin Drive Extension (GDE) freeway, or to your left as you drive towards Watson along the Barton Highway after the GDE underpass. Our visit in July is reported in *News of FOG* September–October 2018, page 13.

1–2 December: Berlang Swamp, Back Creek TSR & private grassland (& the Big Hole)

Rainer Rehwinkel is leading a weekend excursion to sites in and near the north-west corner of Deua National Park, NSW, close to the Shoalhaven River. The sites are Berlang Swamp, which is heathy (and healthy) grassland, and grassland at Back Creek Travelling Stock Reserve, and we have also just been invited to visit grassland on a private property nearby, overlooking the Shoalhaven (photo, page 1). For this excursion we have been lucky enough to be given access to the edge of Berlang Swamp, which means that minimal walking will be required to reach these sites. It would have been several kilometres walk otherwise. Some members of the group will also be walking the few kilometres to see the Big Hole (photo in the previous *News of FOG*, p.1).

These destinations are south of Majors Creek and south-east of Captains Flat. The plan is to arrive on Friday evening, 30 November. Accommodation will be at Berlang Camping Area or Deua Tin Huts (FOG reserved one hut, months ago).

Register with margaret.ning@fog.org.au to get full details, directions and maps and discuss accommodation options.

If you want to stay at the huts, *be prompt in contacting Margaret in case more need to be booked.*

FOG work on National Lands: Stirling Park, ACT

**Sunday 28 October
& Sunday 25 November
9 am – 12.30 pm**

Your help is needed and always welcome.

Tools are provided. You need to wear eye protection, gardening clothes (including hat) and solid footwear appropriate for the work and the weather, and bring your own drinking water. The workparty convenor **provides morning tea**, making these into pleasant social occasions.

Please **register by two days before** the workparty with jamie.pittock@fog.org.au, so there are enough tools and tea for everyone, and so you can be told if the weather forecast has led to a cancellation. Workparties are cancelled if there is lightning; or there is heavy rain; or the forecast is for 35C or more; or there is a total fire ban.

Sunday 28 October, 9 am. This day's work will be on the Ridge – Gurubang Dhaura. We will meet at the intersection of Clarke and Fitzgerald streets in Yarralumla. We will be cutting and daubing regrowth woody weeds, spraying weeds, watering saplings and repairing tree guards, and collecting any rubbish.

Sunday 25 November, 9 am. Today's work will be based on Alexandrina Drive, Stirling Park, working from Haines Creek to Attunga Point. We will meet at the management gate on Alexandrina Drive in Yarralumla, west of Mariner Place and before the rusty DNA sculpture. We will be cutting and daubing regrowth woody weeds, spraying weeds, watering saplings and repairing tree guards, and collecting rubbish.

FOG work at Hall Cemetery woodland, ACT, starting at 9.00 am

On **Saturday 3 November**, your help is needed and welcome at Hall Cemetery (a short way along Wallaroo Road, which is a turning off the Barton Highway not far before the NSW border). The work will be a combination of spot application of herbicide and physical removal or trimming.

Morning tea is provided. Please dress for the weather and gardening, with sturdy footwear. **Most important:** REGISTER with john.fitzgerald@fog.org.au at least two days before the workparty, so there is enough tea and equipment for everyone.



FOG Committee – comments and news

About membership renewals for 2019

FOG membership renewals for 2019 are due in January. If our records show that your membership runs out at the end of 2018 Sarah will be sending you a reminder in December.

As notified earlier in the year, the committee decided to increase the membership payments, to ensure our basic costs are covered. Therefore, the fees per calendar year will be:

- \$30 for individuals, families, not for profit groups;
- \$10 for students and concessions;
- \$60 for corporate bodies/organisations.

If you have any queries about the status of your membership or need to change your details, please don't hesitate to contact Sarah on membership@fog.org.au.

NCA Lands, Yarramundi Grassland 'Demonstration of Revegetation'

FOG learned in September that it had received a grant of just over \$3000 from 2018–19 Environment Grants awarded by ACT Government. FOG's application was fully supported by National Capital Authority (NCA), and FOG now looks forward to work with Greening Australia treating two small areas at Yarramundi Grassland (total 80 m²), as a small-scale demonstration of the 'scrape and sow' technique.

At these two areas, FOG's spot-spraying in November 2017 killed dense Chilean Needle Grass (CNG). Fleishy weeds are today (spring 2018) growing actively among the dead grass. From previous experience at this site, particularly tube-stock replanting projects, FOG knows that CNG, fleishy weeds (mostly Plantain and Catsear), and other exotics (*Paspalum* particularly), regrow readily from the soil seedbank despite previous spraying.

'Scrape and sow' involves removing several centimetres depth of (often nutrient-enriched) topsoil and seedbank (as in the photo below) and then sowing a native seed mix into the exposed soil layer (as in the photo overleaf). This technique eliminates or severely



...continues next page

FOG Advocacy by Naarilla Hirsch

August

1. Following on from the referral to develop York Park last year, the Commonwealth released for comment Preliminary Documentation for this proposal. Some of the issues that FOG pointed out (in last year's submission) as missing from the original referral have been addressed in the Preliminary Documentation. However, the view expressed by FOG in its submission on the Preliminary Documentation is substantially the same as in its 2017 submission. Basically, FOG strongly opposed the referral, disagreed with some of the additional conclusions in the latest document, considered that a number of our original objections are still valid and repeated the initial recommendations. These were that the development proposal be rejected, that the Department of Finance provide funding now for appropriate weed control in the NTG (Natural Temperate Grassland) at York Park, as compensation for non-compliance with conditions of previous approvals, and that York Park be directly and permanently added to the national conservation estate and managed by an area of government that has expertise in conservation.

In the unfortunate situation that approval is given for this project, FOG raised a number of concerns with the proposed offset package, and recommended that no further actions be taken in terms of developing the site until the offset package is implemented, and until some of the improvement in NTG quality and Golden Sun Moth numbers have already been seen and until adequate offsets for the loss of a population of Striped Legless Lizard be included. Also, if no improvements in the offset area is seen, that development be delayed until these occur or the approval be rescinded.

2. Another EPBC referral this month was for the Belconnen Trunk Sewer Project. FOG's submission made a number of points about this referral, including that targeted surveys for species such as the Ginninderra Peppercreep be undertaken and the actual quality of any NTG patches be assessed before a decision is made about the route for the trunk sewer and possible mitigation and offset measures. FOG expressed concern about the location indicated for a future Odour Control Unit, which appears to be in the Blue Devil Grassland in Umbagog District Park. The referral does mention management of weeds of national significance is required, but misses a fine opportunity for rehabilitation along the whole 2.4 km route.

3. The NSW Threatened Species Scientific Committee is assessing whether *Plinthanthesis rodwayi*, a grass in a very restricted area of Budawang National Park, is eligible for listing as Critically Endangered. FOG supported the listing for the reasons outlined in the determination and drew attention to the need for appropriately funded applied research into, and development of, appropriate fire and herbivory management regimes.

September

4. The NSW NPWS has released a draft plan of management for the Mount Canobolus State Conservation Area. This contains the threatened Tablelands Snow Gum Grassy Woodland community. The management plan includes reference to a proposal for 63 km of mountain bike single-track traversing much of the Conservation Area. FOG's response was to oppose this proposal for reasons similar to those expressed for the recent proposal about horse riding in national parks – while recognising that the intent might be to avoid areas of particular environmental sensitivity, a big issue is the level of compliance with any management plan or other requirements once any mountain bike riding is allowed.

The full text of FOG submissions appears on our website.

Committee news and comments, continued

reduces weed regeneration, as can be seen at ‘Scottsdale’ near Bredbo, at Kama Nature Reserve, and Riverside Park in Molonglo.

Applying this technique at Yarramundi Grassland (which is at 245 Lady Denman Drive, Acton) will produce valuable practical and economic information (whether the trial succeeds or not) for both FOG and other conservation groups in planning future treatment of a range of sites.

FOG commits to a small financial contribution, and also FOG members will contribute approximately 100 hours of support and groundwork (beginning this month) to achieve the revegetation. There will be articles in *News of FOG*, and a field visit at the end of 2019 to communicate the main lessons learnt, not only to FOG members but also to other conservation community individuals and groups.

Please contact john.fitzgerald@fog.org.au to see how you can join in this exciting initiative.

FOG sincerely thanks the ACT Government and Minister Gentleman, Environment and Land Management, for the grant awarded.

John Fitz Gerald



This tractor is sowing into the scrape. Seed of various species, mixed with sand to give weight, is put into the seed drill (red box behind the tractor).

Tubes under the box carry the seed to the top few millimetres of soil where it is pressed in with the roller. These photos were taken at the Greening Australia ‘scrape and sow’ at Evatt ACT, in May 2018.

Photos: Ann Milligan.



Thanks for help

Thank you to the several FOG members who found time and energy to help in the Clean Up morning organised by Suzanne Orr MLA (Member for Yerrabi) at North Franklin Grassland. FOG was a co-organiser of Suzanne’s initiative. Although the work was cut short by a storm (welcome rain though it cancelled the planned barbecue lunch), the team, including Suzanne, collected a number of bags of rubbish from the area.

Thanks too to those members who helped staff the display of landcare-type work by FOG and other Friends groups at Jamison Centre in early September, which generated lots of interest.



Great news for mature native hollow-bearing trees

FOG was a signatory to a submission from member groups of the Conservation Council ACT Region to the ACT Scientific Committee, in early 2017, asking that the removal of mature native trees be acknowledged as a key threatening process. Sarah Sharp was our representative on the team who prepared the submission, called ‘Loss of Native Hollow-bearing Trees’ (<https://conservationcouncil.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/20170219-Clearing-of-hollow-bearing-trees-nomination-Feb-2017-v2.pdf>).

The Conservation Council reported this month that, after consideration and taking advice from scientists and community, the Committee has: “agreed to broaden the threatening process from the ‘loss of hollow-bearing trees’ to the key threatening process of ‘Loss of mature native trees (including hollow bearing trees) and a lack of recruitment’”. The instrument containing the advice took effect on 27 September 2018 (<https://www.legislation.act.gov.au/ni/2018-536/>).

An action plan is to be drawn up to outline measures to reduce removal of mature native trees. Conservation Issues and Proposed Management Actions include protection such as restricting clearing of mature eucalypts and mature native trees that contain nest hollows and “retention of non-mature native trees across urban and rural landscapes to ensure a future supply of mature trees and avoid lag times.” The advice also suggests actions to conserve and manage trees across the landscape and for further monitoring and research including on Eucalypt dieback in the ACT and “appropriate provenance for revegetation programs under climate change”.



Rare bird at Cooma



The nest site in situ.

A nest of the very rare ‘Mop Robin’, spotted at ‘Quartz Hill’, Cooma, by FOG member June Wilkinson (who supplied the photos).

Magpie-lark or Pee-wee, *Grallina cyanoleuca*, a pied piper that likes to play with mud

Michael Bedingfield

Magpie-larks like to build their bowl-shaped nests with pieces of fibrous plant material stuck together with mud and with a lining of feathers, grass and other soft materials. With mud as glue, the construction is plastered on a roughly horizontal tree branch up to 20 metres above the ground. They like to have some water not too far away, such as a creek or dam. There they will get the mud for the nest, and also look for food in the mud or shallow water.

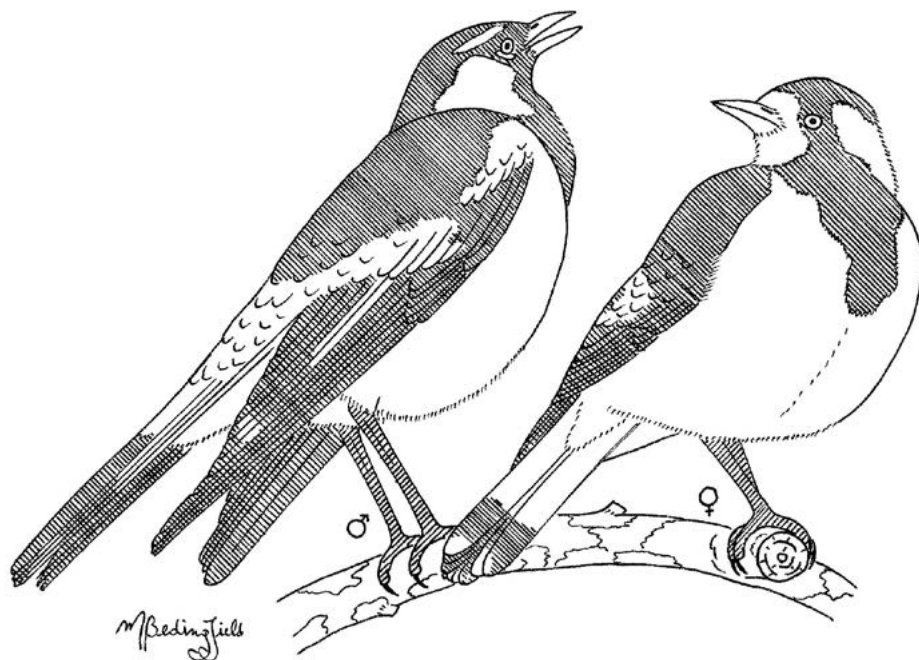
With their black and white colouring they get the first part of their common name. Since they sing with such clear ringing notes they earn the extra title of lark. They are not related to the Magpies or Larks; instead they belong to family Monarchidae, the monarch flycatchers, which includes such birds as the Willie Wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys* and Satin Flycatcher *Myiagra cyanoleuca*. Another popular common name is Pee-wee (or less often Pee-wit), which resembles a song phrase they often use. The scientific name is *Grallina cyanoleuca*. With their habitual liking for water and mud they are sometimes also called a Mud-lark.

They are medium sized birds with the adults' head-to-tail length being about 26–30 cm. The males and females have slightly different colouring. The most distinguishing characteristics are that the male has a white eyebrow and black throat while the female has no eyebrow but has a white face and throat. Both sexes are shown in my drawing with the male on the left. The juvenile has a white eyebrow and a white throat. After hatching the young are clothed in grey down and fledge after about 20 days with their black and white plumage. Both parents participate in incubating the eggs and feeding the young. The juveniles leave home after a few months and join the non-breeding flock. In productive times or places more than one brood is raised in a season.

Breeding pairs are quite territorial and can have a range of up to 10 hectares. They like open wooded landscapes and grassy areas, so an ideal habitat for them is grassy woodland with some water handy. They are reasonably flexible but avoid thick forests and the driest deserts. If no trees are available for building a nest on they will improvise by using man-made structures such as a windmill or telegraph post. They occur in most parts of the Australian continent but are rare in Tasmania. They also have populations in Timor, southern New Guinea and Lord Howe Island. The clearing of forests for agriculture and the provision of permanent water for stock on farms has been advantageous for them and increased their range. Urban parklands are also suitable so they are a common sight and there is no threat to their future.

In flight they have a straight, flapping motion. They also have a large wing surface area for their weight that enables them to be quite elusive and change height and direction suddenly. They can take off easily and be quite acrobatic.

Magpie-larks are ground feeding birds that live on insects and other invertebrates. As well as searching among the ground cover plants they also like to use their feet to scratch busily in the leaf litter looking



for food. They will rotate in one spot, alternately scratching and pecking at the ground. It looks like a sort of dance, even more so if both male and female are doing it together. Their habitat preference brings them into direct competition with Australian Magpies, *Gymnorhina tibicen*, for territory and food. They cope with the much larger and more aggressive Magpies, which they can evade using their own flying skills, and so they tolerate the Magpies' high speed swooping. In turn the smaller birds can become quite aggressive themselves and will harass larger birds they see as a threat including their Magpie neighbours, Ravens or Kookaburras. They are attracted to mirrors and windows and will attack the reflection they see there.

When proclaiming their territory Magpie-lark couples will perch side by side on a tree branch or other vantage point and sing a duet in strident voices. The birds sing rapidly and alternately, raising their wings above their heads as they do so. They use the notes 'pee-wee, pee-wee' and one cannot distinguish which bird is singing the particular notes. They have a number of other loud piping calls and whistles as well as making some chirring sounds. With their distinctive song these birds' ringing voices are familiar and welcome in the Canberra region.

References

Readers Digest Complete Book of Australian Birds (1976)
Numerous authors

<http://www.birdsinbackyards.net/species/Grallina-cyanoleuca>

<http://www.birdlife.org.au/bird-profile/magpie-lark>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magpie-lark>



Close up

'Weeds' – Foe or Friend by John Fitz Gerald

My article this time follows my curiosity about some plants having 'weed' in their common names. When these are native species, an implication to those who don't probe too deeply can be that these are introduced invasive plants. Fireweeds (*Senecio*) are a good example: while some truly serious introductions occur in this genus, there are also many dinky-di natives.

This 'Close up' looks into three native species. All are widespread through Australia and New Zealand, and two belong to genera spread around several continents. It seems that the weed part of common names for the natives has 'rubbed off' from near relatives.

Small Crumbweed, *Dysphania pumilio*: the straggling branches carry many small florets that mature to contain seed (image 1) and fall as individual packages of a size and colour something like bread crumbs. When the partial wrapping is removed from a globular seed (image 2), a thin film is still attached to the seed but can be rubbed off to reveal the shiny black surface (centre seed in 2).



Lesser Joyweed, *Alternanthera denticulata*: this genus includes one highly invasive species, the aquatic Alligator Weed, declared a Weed Of National Significance (WONS) in Australia. Lesser Joyweed is a small sprawling plant with tiny white inflorescences (image 3) including many papery bracts separating seed-containing parts. Pull off the bracts, then open the papery covering (image 4) to reveal small brown shiny seed.



Finally **Common Sneezeweed**, *Centipeda cunninghamii*: this genus is dominantly Australasian and the common name appears (see Wikipedia) to come from close relatives in the Daisy Family, one of which in North America was the source of snuff. Common Sneezeweed has globular clusters of many green flowers (image 5) and is reasonably common above water level in damp banks of rivers and dams. Clusters mature to packages of elongated seed structures tightly packed together (image 6, a side-on view of a package where part of the seed mass has pulled away). Each seed structure has a furry cover which, when peeled back (a little like splitting a banana skin, see top left of 7), liberates the small and shiny brown seed (lower half of 7).



Each of the three species produces large numbers of small seeds, certainly thrives in a range of situations, and probably responds opportunistically when conditions are right. Therefore they will possibly boom at times, probably getting weedy in the wrong places. However, I hope the reader can pause the next time they read 'weed' in a species name – "it ain't necessarily so"!

Images 1–4, 6 and 7 were all captured at the National Seed Bank of the Australian National Botanic Gardens. They can be reproduced freely if attributed and linked to the Creative Common licence CC BY (<http://creativecommons.org.au/learn/licences/>).

Scale bars represent 1 mm in images 1, 2, 3 and 0.5 mm in images 4, 5, 6 and 7.



STEP adds to their publicity material with grant from FOG

Andy Russell

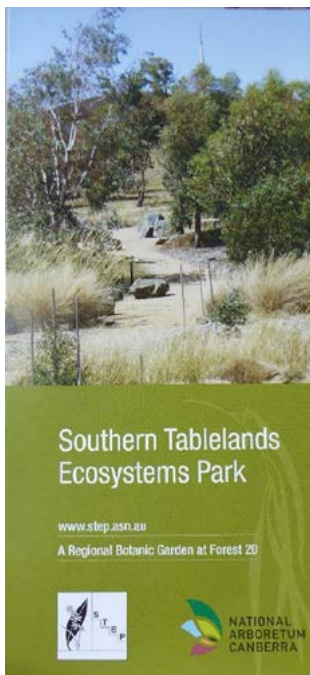
STEP has made good use of a grant from Friends of Grasslands to produce a leaflet (right) describing some the grasses that have been planted at their site, Forest 20 at the National Arboretum Canberra. We acknowledge with pleasure the opportunity to use Michael Bedingfield's excellent drawings.

This leaflet is the third leaflet produced by STEP and is part of our process to promote Forest 20 as a Southern Tablelands Regional Botanic Garden. The leaflet was produced by a subcommittee comprising Max Bourke, Rainer Rehwinkel and Andy Russell and was designed by Mariana Rollgejser who was also the designer for our eucalypts leaflet. Max Bourke prepared the grant application, and following being advised by FOG that our application was approved, Rainer and Andy wrote the grasses descriptions. A considerable editing process followed in which David Shorthouse was involved before Mariana did her magic work. Mariana drew the illustration for *Austrostipa verticillata* from some of Andy's photos, as Michael Bedingfield did not have a drawing for this species. From the time of writing the grant application, to completion, this project has taken close to a year.

The first leaflet that we produced was *Eucalypts of Lot 100*, as Forest 20 was previously called. Here is an extract from *STEP News* Number 14, Summer 2011, about it.

Eucalypts of Lot 100, our new STEP pamphlet, is wrapped into your copy of this issue of the *STEP Newsletter*. This pamphlet powerfully communicates the STEP vision to plant a microcosm of the vegetation typical of the Southern Tablelands region of NSW and the ACT. It presents the Eucalypts planted at the STEP site on 16 foldout panels and includes an image of a mature tree with accompanying text explaining the botanic, geographic and functional features. The concept for the pamphlet originated from a suggestion from STEP member, Max Bourke, that STEP should apply for a grant from the newly established Bjarne K Dahl Trust (visit <http://dahltrust.org.au/about-us?>). This trust aims to promote community education about Eucalypts. Our STEP pamphlet includes information about the position of Eucalypts in the southern tablelands landscape as the rationale for the planting design for Lot 100. The creative design for the STEP pamphlet is the work of Mariana Rollgejser, a professional designer. Max Bourke wrote the text for the tree descriptions and David Shorthouse arranged for the photos and final editing.

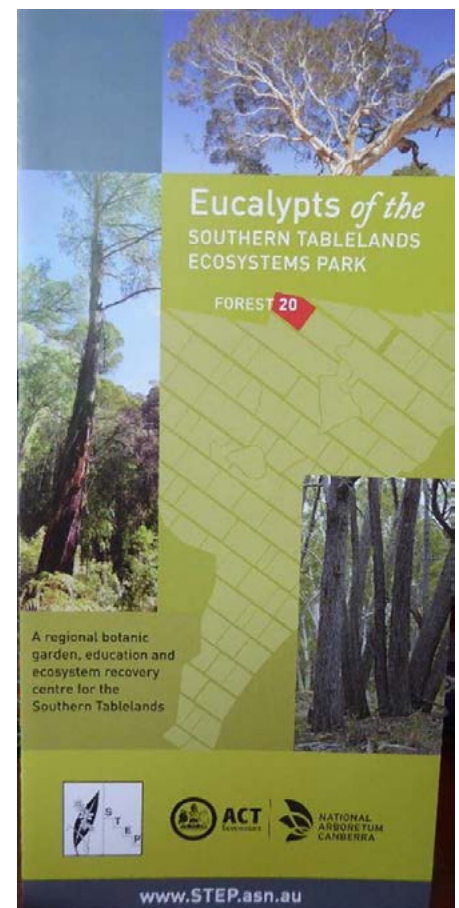
This pamphlet (below right) has been reprinted with some changes. The Lot 100 name disappeared in 2013 with the complete renaming of the Arboretum Forests and our site became Forest 20. Secondly our plantings of *Eucalyptus delegatensis* Alpine Ash did not survive and *Eucalyptus radiata* subsp. *robertsonii* was planted in their place. The photos used in this leaflet were supplied by Australian National Botanic Gardens, John Evans, David Shorthouse and the National Parks Association of the ACT Inc.



The STEP information leaflet (left) was the result of another lengthy process and was completed in November 2017. The National Arboretum Canberra (NAC) administration assisted us with this updated and professional information brochure. Lynne Sealie was particularly helpful in finalising this leaflet. The leaflet is available at the Village Centre, NAC and has been provided to the Friends of NAC Guides.

Other publicity materials we have are glossy A4 pages showing the progress at Forest 20, titled 'STEP Our Journey'. The reverse side is titled '3 Seasons at STEP', with plants flowering in summer, winter and spring. A further double-sided glossy A4 shows the birds that have been seen at Forest 20. These photos were not taken at Forest 20.

Our next projects include a leaflet on the *Acacias* growing at Forest 20. We have over 20 *Acacia* species. Another project is to produce a double-sided sheet with some of the insects we have seen and also another on some of the weeds we have to deal with.



Cultivation corner

Experimenting with the terrestrial orchid *Pterostylis pedunculata* as an indoor plant

Janet Russell

At one of the Australian Native Plant Society (ANPS) bi-annual sales, when I was on duty at the information tent, a young man asked whether I knew of any native plants that would grow indoors. He had just moved into an apartment. We had only just moved into our own apartment and I had to confess I had no idea. I suggested that he experiment and write and tell us how he got on. The idea of growing native plants indoors has exercised my mind since.

We bought the Maroonhood, *Pterostylis pedunculata*, at the ANPS plant sale in 2008. It is a Canberra plant. I have written about them before under the guise of *Pterostylis curta* or simply *Pterostylis* sp.* until I found out from an expert what species they were. We had 40 plants by 2012. I have lifted them several times since, and when we had too many plants for the pot last year I transferred some into four smaller pots which have been sitting on the balcony. I had no idea how many plants I had transferred to each pot as the corms sometimes may be no bigger than a particle of soil. The four pots all sprouted leaves and I gave one pot away and brought the other three inside.



This was in the nature of an experiment to see if they could live in our heated apartment. They do get respite from the heat when the heating is turned off at times during the day and overnight. Apart from whether they survived or not, I wanted to see whether they would grow towards the light. One pot is on a table about a metre from the window. These orchids have grown straight as ramrods without a nod towards the light, and all three that are flowering face different directions. None face south towards the light; all are facing away from each other towards the other three points of the compass. I checked the larger pot outside, which has more flowers, and the flowers do all tend to face outwards. I suppose that makes sense if they are looking to get their flowers pollinated by a gnat or other flying insect. It may not be something immediately obvious in the field because they often do not flower together in large numbers.

Some of the plants were flowering and others were on their way when I brought them in, but there is one pot where all the plants are still only at the leaf stage and they have remained so with no signs of a stem. While *Pterostylis* sp. are not the most spectacular of flowers, having them accessible encourages you to look at them more carefully as you pass by. The delicacy, colour, and detail are easier to appreciate.

However, as time has passed the indoor plants have withered and faded while the outdoor orchids have mostly remained robust and still a rich maroon colour. This year I placed the outdoor orchids out of the sun, but still with access to light, because the leaves usually start looking dry and distressed before the flowers fade. They have had a long flowering and even now they are looking fresh except for two or so. However, I thought that they are also looking spindly. The tallest one is 28 cm which is taller than the average height of them: say, 22 cm. According to *NSW Flora online* they can grow to a maximum of 25 cm so perhaps most are not spindly after all and they are in the perfect spot outdoors.



Top: *Pterostylis pedunculata* in a 30 cm diameter pot on our balcony in 2016.

Left: One of our indoor flowering *P. pedunculata*, about 10 cm tall.

Below: The flower stems vary considerably in height.

Photos: Janet Russell.



* e.g. <http://fog.org.au/Newsletters/2012-05newsletter.pdf> p. 7; <http://fog.org.au/Newsletters/2016-01newsletter.pdf> p. 12; <http://fog.org.au/Newsletters/2016-09newsletter.pdf> p. 10.

Balcony gardening with Rainer Rehwinkel

Arguably one of the rarest plants of SE Australia is *Lepidium hyssopifolium*, the Aromatic Peppercress. It is now not known from any wild population in NSW, except perhaps the population from which this plant (in the photo) derives. I found it initially as a seedling that emerged in bare ground in my garden after we moved into our new house in Bungendore about 15 years ago.

Not initially knowing what it was, I eventually realised what genus it belonged to, and sent a specimen to the National Herbarium for identification. The curator there at that time, FOG member Dave Mallinson, sent the specimen on to a *Lepidium* specialist in Victoria, Neville Walsh, who duly recognised this as the endangered *L. hyssopifolium*, which was then known from a few NSW locations as well as from Victoria and Tasmania.

Since then, the other known NSW populations have not been found again. Meanwhile, my plants, several of which emerged from seedlings from the initially discovered plant, produced enough seeds for me to send some off to the NSW Seedbank at Mt Annan Botanical Gardens. A message came back letting me know that that collection yielded some 70,000 seeds, some of which, I believe, were sent to the Millennium Seed Project at Kew in the UK.

Over the years since, I have managed to keep a small population alive, both in my Bungendore garden in NSW and subsequently at Downer, ACT, and now on my apartment balcony at Belconnen, ACT. Over that time, I, along with colleagues at the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) and volunteers from Friends of Grasslands and Bush Heritage Australia have tried, mostly unsuccessfully, to establish this species in various locations in the Canberra and Cooma area. The most recent effort has been to establish plants at Mcleods Creek NR near Gundaroo, in a project overseen by Susannah Power and Libby Lindsay from OEH.

Meanwhile, I have two mature plants and many seedlings on my balcony, as well as several bags of seeds to perpetuate the species!

Here's a profile I wrote on the species while working with OEH:

<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/threatenedSpeciesApp/profile.aspx?id=10462>



Lepidium hyssopifolium, Aromatic Peppercress, on Rainer's balcony.

Rainer published this short article and photo on 16 October on his Facebook page. It has generated a great deal of interest and comment. See https://www.facebook.com/100004693938376/posts/1156038354562618/?comment_id=1158456920987428



Photos from recent field work / workparties



Above left: Looking up at *Craspedia variabilis*, Hall Cemetery, 7 October. Photo: Stephen Horn.

Below left: A scared Brown Snake escaping (stage right) from Andrew Zelnik's insistent lens.

Right: Jamie Pittock on 26 August with previous plantings. Photo: Margaret Ning.

Reports from recent FOG activities

Narrandera weekend adventure by Alice Bauer

A total of 27 FOG and ANPS members spent a lovely fine-weather weekend (21–24 September) in Narrandera. The trip was run smoothly and calmly by Rainer Rehwinkel. After a day of travel from Canberra, the group met at Fivebough Swamp, Leeton. The large wetland had some, but not much, water, and the birdlife was amazing! We saw Spotted Crane, Baillon's Crane, Black-shouldered Kite, White-bellied Sea-eagle, Swamp Harrier, Glossy Ibis, Collared Sparrowhawk, Red-kneed Dotterel, Whiskered Tern and Red-necked Avocet. But there was no sign of the Brolga that breeds there.

That afternoon the team settled down for a lovely welcome dinner and chin-wag at the Charles Sturt Hotel, Narrandera.

Day two saw us visit Milthorpes TSR. The reserve didn't look promising, but to our surprise there were many small plants flowering in the dry. The stock reserve was of open Grey Box Woodland (an endangered ecological community), and River Red Gum Forest nearer the river. Some plants we saw were: *Acacia pendula*, *Calotis cuneifolia*, *Erodium crinitum*, *Lobelia concolor*, *Minuria leptophylla*, *Maireana decalvans*, *Myoporum debile*, *Rhodanthe corymbiflorum*, *Vittadinia gracilis*, *Wurmbea dioica*. I enjoyed stumbling across a large amount of the adequately named Scrambled Eggs (*Goodenia pinnatifida*) with Geoff Robertson, who then taught me to pour a little water onto lichen and watch it swell through the reverse end of binoculars (I absorbed this information like a sponge!). Warwick W and his wife Pat also passed on some weed knowledge (Crows-foot, Wild Oats, and Onion Grass, to name some), and I loved learning about the 'corkscrew' effect of speargrass seeds.

On this trip Jo Walker, a long and faithful member of ANPS, had recently turned 80. Therefore, morning tea, under two huge gums, was a celebration with mud cake, home-baked goodies and singing happy birthday. Mike Shihoff crafted a clever poem: 'Jo Jo // Even though you're Botanically weighty // You matured into our matey // True, true blue!'.

Next up was Buckingbong State Forest – a delightful area with White Cypress-pine Woodland. Some other natives included: *Myriocephalus rhizocephalus*, an *Amyema* sp., *Calotis cuneifolia*, *Chrysocephalum apiculatum*, *Convolvulus* sp. (possibly *C. graminetinus*), *Hyalosperma semisterile*, *Maireana* sp. (possibly *M. excavata*), a *Ptilotus* sp., *Senna artemisioides* and the exotic *Cotula coronopifolia*. It was nice to learn how to distinguish a White Cypress-pine from a Black Cypress-pine (by looking for I's and A's in the middle part of the cone) – thanks Warwick! Also, Jo, Margaret and I enjoyed listening to the bush-birds here (Western Gerygone, Rufous Whistler, White-winged Chough, and Apostlebird).

After Buckingbong, we had a small road-side stop on the way, to look at the endangered Round-leaved Wilsonia (*Wilsonia rotundifolia*), some Broughton Pea (*Swainsona procumbens*), Long Eryngium (*Eryngium paludosum*) and a *Brachyscome*. Then we ventured on to Yorkies Plain TSR. On the side of the Sturt Highway, this reserve simply looked like a big ol' paddock to me! The grassland (Speargrass Grassland as explained by Geoff) had a backdrop of River Red Gum Woodland where a creek runs past. Rainer informed me this site contains patches of Myall Woodland, a NSW-listed endangered ecological community, evidenced by remnant Weeping Boree (*Acacia pendula*) trees. Not just a paddock after all! Also, once we had spread out over the dry land, numerous flowers of pink, yellow, white and purple came to view (including *Calotis scabiosifolia* and *Leiocarpa brevicompta*). The *Swainsona procumbens* (photo, right, by Rainer Rehwinkel) were particularly large and beautiful! Several of us had fun watching a tame mob of Superb Parrots feeding each other in the mistletoe of a River Red Gum.

Returning to Narrandera, we stopped in for a quick peek at the artificial Narrandera Wetlands adjacent to the Murrumbidgee. We saw a nice dark Bearded Dragon sunning itself on a log, Little and Noisy Friarbirds, a Mistletoebird and a Koala!



Eucalyptus microcarpa (Grey Box) Grassy Woodland at Milthorpes TSR.
Photo: Rainer Rehwinkel.



Erodium crinitum, Blue Stork's-bill; a native among exotics at Milthorpes TSR. Photographer unknown.



Senna artemisioides, Buckingbong State Forest.
Photo: Brian Everingham.



...continues on next page

Narrandera weekend adventure, continued

That night we shared the most delicious pizzas, salad and fish and chips at the Morundah Pub. As we were leaving the owner led us out the side, and into a massive performance shed. Apparently, this tiny town of the Riverina is famous for hosting operas and ballets.

After this, we headed to a cow-grazed paddock a few kilometres out of town, which had a grassland dominated by *Austrostipa aristiglumis*. Here David Parker, OEH Threatened Species Officer, gave a talk and took us spot-lighting for the Plains-wanderer. The bird is critically endangered, and numbers about 500 in the wild. They are a tad 'stupid' and will let you walk up and catch them. The female chooses a mate who incubates the eggs she lays. A breeding program will start up soon, where David will catch three lots of 30 individuals to deliver to three different zoos. Out of 16 sites like this one, David said he has only spotted Plains-wanderers at two sites lately. We didn't see a Plains-wanderer, but it was great to learn all about this little bird, and what is being done. It was also nice to be walking around under the moonlight with good company.

Day three saw us depart for the Bimble Box Woodland and Speargrass Grassland at Lake Coolah. The lake was dry. Again, I was amazed to see so many small and wonderful plants growing in the bone-dry lakebed. Some species recorded were: *Convolvulus* sp., *Duma horrida*, *Erodium* sp., *Hyalosperma semisterile*, *Maireana* spp. (including possibly *M. humillima*), *Ptilotus spathulatus* and *Vittadinia cuneata*. As Maryke moved her car she noticed several Little Eagles under a tree by the road. There were four of them feeding from a kangaroo road kill, and about a dozen Black Kite watching on. Some Whistling Kite were also spotted in the mix. Geoff and Margaret were happy to see Red-capped Robin, Chestnut-rumped Heathwren and White-fronted Chat at this site. Over morning tea others saw a Painted Honeyeater, Yellow Rosella, Blue Bonnet and Mulga Parrot.

Next, we travelled along Kamarah Road, making various stops to see woodlands with Grey Box, White Cypress-pine Woodland and Yellow Box. One spot (Mejum State Forest) showed us some lovely flowers and orchids: *Thysanotus patersonii*, *Dampiera lanceolata*, *Caladenia atrovessa*, *Glycine clandestina*, *Glossodia major* and *Diuris pardina*, as well as greenhoods.

After lunch in a Cypress-pine Woodland we moved to another roadside location, where Kat and I gave small talks about our postgraduate research projects. The last Cypress-pine Woodland we saw was amazing. The hard sandy soil was uniformly covered with holes drilled into the ground (big enough to stick a thumb down them). They were EVERYWHERE! Roger Farrow said they were made by little green ants that come out by night.

The day was wrapped up at Rocky Waterholes Reserve at Bundigery creek. At a relaxed pace, we walked the track winding along the river to admire the River Red Gum Forest, riparian habitat, Water Ribbons (*Triglochin procerum*), Grey Box Woodland, plus a Koala above the carpark!

That night we scrubbed up and dined at the Lazy Lizard Restaurant!

On Monday morning 18 of us had a guided tour of the John Lake Centre at the Department of Primary Industry's fisheries facility. It was interesting to see the aquaria and hatcheries and to hear how the place is run, and how many native fish are released into the Murray-Darling Basin ... followed (of course!) by a scrummy cuppa and biscuit. What a weekend.

Thank you FOG!!

Matt talking to the remaining group members about the native fish breeding and stocking program in the DPI Narrandera Fisheries Centre in the hatchery building. Photo: Andrew Zelnik.



Maireana decalvans, Black Cottonbush at Lake Coolah. Photo: Rainer Rehwinkel.



Red-capped Robin. Photo: Brian Everingham.



Caladenia atrovessa at Mejum State Forest. Photo: Brian Everingham.



Return to 'Ballyhooly', 14 October by Margaret Ning

Twenty visitors went on a morning walk for a couple of hours at 'Ballyhooly', south-east of Bungendore NSW, the property of the Mossops, FOG members. We headed north for over a kilometre to the top of a saddle where our hosts thought we had the most chance of seeing an orchid. They were right! A pretty pink *Caladenia carnea* greeted us. Over the next 50 m or so we managed also to see the leaves of Greenhoods, Parsons Bands and Donkey Orchids. Heading back we continued to add to the species list.

After a very civilised break in the middle of the day to have lunch, ten of us went out again for another couple of hours walking, in a different direction, along a spring-fed drainage line this time.

The property consists mainly of open forest, with occasional more open areas with patches of grassland forbs. It was obvious that in a good year it would be a magnificent sight in spring. We must visit again in such a year. For today, the weather was perfect, with no rain but a couple of slightly misty patches.

The kangaroo lawn effect, this time, meant we saw slightly fewer species than on our last visit, because a dozen grass species were too short to be identifiable!! The kangaroos are even eating the Red-anthered Wallaby Grass (*Rytidosperma pallidum*) around the house. Although the property is the driest it's been in 15 years, we still managed to add 25 species to their plant list.

We saw a Brittle Gum with extensively damaged bark (photo below). Roger's query about it to Dr David Lindenmayer at ANU produced this response: 'Hi Roger – three things can do this: (i) Yellow-bellied Glider – but the trunk is not well incised to bleed

the eucalypt sap; (ii) Koalas sometimes do this – searching for extra salts; (iii) Cockatoos can do this – part of beak health. This seems too extensive for that, but still plausible.' However, Rod Pietsch expressed doubts about Koalas and Gliders in this area, and suggested the bark chewers may be cockatoos or galahs.

With Roger Farrow, there were diversions to insect happenings, like 'Wattle Tick Scale Beetle'. Andrew Zelnik's photo (right) shows the Wattle Tick Scale Beetles *Cychramtodes murrayi* (black) doing biological control of the wattle tick scale, as can be seen by the scale marks on the left. For Roger, finding these beetles made his day!

Top right: the group about to start off, with our host (taller than the rest of us).
Photo: Andrew Zelnik.

Next right: *Caladenia carnea*.
Photo: Margaret Ning.

Top left: Bark damage on eucalypt.
Photo: Roger Farrow.

Immediate right: *Notechis scutata*, Tiger Snake. Photo: Janet Russell.

Bottom left & right: *Leucopogon fraseri*. Left, by Janet Russell. Right by Andrew Zelnik showing its size compared to a 5c piece.

Far right: Button everlasting *Coronidium scorpioides*.
Photo: Andrew Zelnik.



Happy wandering in regenerating grassland at Sutton NSW, 20 September

by Margaret Ning

We had a very pleasant afternoon visit to the property of FOG members Marchien and Arnold. There were nine of us altogether, exploring the grassland in their large paddock for a couple of hours, in sunny though cool weather. The Early Nancies were lovely.

This paddock has not been fertilised or improved for between 19 and 25 years, and it displayed around 70 native species for our enjoyment. *Phalaris* used to be dominant, we were told, and now it is receding. Hairy Panic, on the other hand, is increasing. The only grazers are a herd of ultra-friendly miniature donkeys, which are agisted for a breeder elsewhere in Sutton.

Over afternoon tea afterwards with our hosts, we discussed what we had seen.

Thank you, Marchien and Arnold!



Above: In typical FOG pose, Sarah B., Margaret and Kat, with Arnold, Dimitris (hidden) and Janet standing. Photo: Andrew Zelnik.



Above: "You can't see me now, can you!!"
Photo: Marchien Van Oostende.



Middle right: Early Nancy *Wurmbea dioica*
Bottom right: Peach Heath *Lissanthe strigosa*.
Photos: Andrew Zelnik.



Follow up from the ACT Grassy Woodlands Forum 2018

The ACT Grassy Woodlands Forum was held at the end of June.

Many of the presentations (as Powerpoint files) are now available online, at http://www.environment.act.gov.au/cpr/conservation_and_ecological_communities/lowland_woodlands/act-woodlands-forum.

A summary of the forum was in *News of FOG* September–October 2018, on page 10.

Photos from recent Stirling Park work



Just above, left: Ben Galea indicates tree guards & branches (centre, distance) placed to save regrowth eucalyptus from 'roos & mowers.
Just above, right: Jamie Pittock after applying red-stained herbicide to St Johns Wort (behind him).

Other photos: The team at tea and at work.

Relevant reports and happenings

Gardeners threatening native ecosystems

Rainer Rehwinkel sent through an item posted on the *Mountain Express*, Asheville, NC, site that reminds us of the threat posed by gardeners introducing exotic plants into their gardens and the subsequent threat that may pose for nearby indigenous ecosystems, in this case in the Appalachia.

While, this may not seem directly relevant to FOG, it reminds us of the threat that some gardeners and, more fundamentally, the plant industry can pose. The article quotes an ecologist, Bob Gale, who pointed out how one berry-bearing plant was likely changing the genetics of the North American bird icon, the Cardinal. The article also mentions offenders such as bamboo and ivy. These issues are familiar to our own local weed spotters.

Weed Swap 3 & 4 November

Environmental weeds from *your* garden (see above article) can be taken to **Corkhills Green Waste Recycling Centre** at Mugga Lane, and/or **CSG Green Waste Recycling Centre** on Parkwood Road, Belconnen: 8.30 – 4.40 pm on both Saturday 3 November and Sunday 4 November. To find out what types of weeds will be swappable for a native plant (tubestock), see <http://www.environment.act.gov.au/parks-conservation/plants-and-animals/Biosecurity/invasive-plants#swap>



Re-imagining Australian Grasslands

by Janet Russell

Dr Carolyn Young is the 2018 Friends of the National Library Creative Arts Fellow. She has a PhD in visual arts (ANU) and an honours degree in natural resources (UNE). On 5 September at the National Library, Carolyn presented the results of her research, part of which focuses on small native mammals.

‘Re-imagining Australian Mammals’ was the title of the speech she gave to the audience at the National Library. This was, however, just part of her broader research. The full scope of Carolyn’s works includes artworks of mammals, plants and insects, and photographs of the grasslands in which these creatures live.

These elements are all brought together to create an imaginative picture marking of the passage of time. Carolyn’s images of mammals are cyanotypes. The cyanotype process was developed in the nineteenth century and it is a photographic process that produces a blue image with white lines like a blue negative, the original ‘blueprint’. Carolyn brings in depictions of the animals’ food or nesting material and they form part of the final images. Carolyn has also superimposed Gould’s face on one image, the Brushtail Possum, in recognition of the inspiration that John Gould’s *Book of Mammals*, published in 1863, provided for her work.



A native mammal imaged using the cyanotype process by Carolyn Young. Photo by Margaret Ning, during the talk.

Her other artwork consists of beautifully arranged delicate herbs and grasses or insects against a black background (see photo below right) which she then photographs. These artworks were displayed at an exhibition titled ‘Inhabiting the Woodlands’, at the Goulburn Regional Gallery.

Carolyn’s book, *Grasslands in Transition*, is co-authored by Dr Sue McIntyre, an Honorary Fellow at CSIRO who retired in 2013 after 40 years research experience in native vegetation conservation and management. The photographs capture grasslands at a moment in time and place, but the successive images also demonstrate the changes that time, and industrial agricultural practices, can bring to the grasslands. Sue’s words give meaning and historical context to the photographs of the grasslands.

It is inevitable that the composition of the grasslands will continue to change. There are almost none left in original condition and the better-quality grasslands are subject to constant pressure. The fate of the grasslands and the creatures that inhabit them are bound together. From this series of works we are able to take a last lingering backward glance as we are reminded of a time and a place that no longer exist.

Defiance, at the Blue Devil Grassland, Latham ACT

In 2015, members of FOG and Umbagog Landcare Group joined to monitor vegetation at the Blue Devil Grassland in the north-east Canberra suburb, Latham.

As well as documenting seasonal changes, this effort was planned to encourage an ecological burn of the site.

The burn went ahead on 21 September 2018. A report will be written for the next FOG newsletter issue. For now, here’s a photo of a little Aussie battler: a budding Bulbine Lily determined to press on with life, despite most of its leaves being cooked during this burn.



Resprouting *Themeda triandra* is visible in the background. Some tussocks have grown blades up to 20 cm in one month, despite very little rain.

John Fitz Gerald

Others’ activities coming up

Biodiversity and Climate Change Roadshow, 31 October

‘How can we conserve species from the impacts of climate change?’. A day of tailored training at Queanbeyan NSW. For info: <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/biodiversity-climate-change-roadshow-queanbeyan-tickets-47943605615> or phone 02 9850 6298.

12th Australasian Plant Conservation Conference, APCC12, 11–15 November, CSIRO Canberra ACT.

‘Moving house – a new age for plant translocation and restoration’. Find out more about APCC12, and register, at <http://anpc.asn.au/conferences/2018>.



‘Reference grassy woodland (Bookham Cemetery)’ by Carolyn Young.

Contacts for Friends of Grasslands Inc. groups and projects

Website www.fog.org.au

To contact FOG (general & media): info@fog.org.au;
phones 0403 221 117 / 02 6241 4065 (Geoff Robertson)

Membership inquiries & payments: membership@fog.org.au
(application forms are at www.fog.org.au)

To join in FOG activities/events: activities@fog.org.au

To join FOG working bees:

Hall Cemetery woodland, ACT: john.fitzgerald@fog.org.au

Yarramundi Grassland, ACT: jamie.pittock@fog.org.au

Stirling Park woodland, ACT: jamie.pittock@fog.org.au

Old Cooma Common, NSW: margaret.ning@fog.org.au

'Scottsdale' (nr Bredbo), NSW: linda.spinaze@fog.org.au

Health & Safety matters: info@fog.org.au

FOG merchandise info (books, etc.): booksales@fog.org.au
(order forms are at www.fog.org.au)

Applying for FOG small grants: supportedprojects@fog.org.au

Correspondence & accounts:

Postal: PO Box 440, Jamison Centre, ACT 2614

Correspondence by email: secretary@fog.org.au

Accounts: treasurer@fog.org.au

Newsletters & e-bulletins: newsletter@fog.org.au,
or ebulletin@fog.org.au

To contribute to FOG advocacy:
advocacy@fog.org.au

Website matters: webmanager@fog.org.au

FOG's comprehensive website gives: the calendar of FOG happenings; information about grasslands and grassy woodlands; proformas for applications & orders; all advocacy submissions; all past newsletters (except the most recent).

FOG's and others' dates, late October onwards

28 Oct	Workparty at Stirling Park ACT
31 Oct	Biodiversity and Climate Change, Queanbeyan NSW
3 Nov	Workparty at Hall Cemetery woodland ACT
8 Nov	Monitoring at 'Scottsdale', Bredbo NSW
9–11 Nov	Revisit grassy woodland at Nerriga NSW
11–15 Nov	12th Australasian Plant Conservation Conference, Canberra
17–18 Nov	Hunting the Monaro Golden Daisy across the Monaro, NSW
22 Nov	Rampaging flowering <i>Rutidosia</i> , Crace ACT
25 Nov	Workparty at Stirling Park ACT
30 Nov–2 Dec	Visit to grassland near the Big Hole, Deua NP, NSW
2 Dec	Bush Blitz community day at the ANBG, Canberra

In this issue (approx./abbreviated titles)

Welcome to our new members!
Calling for volunteers (three opportunities).
Three weekend adventures in November.
Wild Pollinator Count: 11–18 November.
FOG activities October – December 2018; & workparties.
FOG advocacy.
About membership renewals for 2019.
NCA Lands: Yarramundi demonstration of revegetation.
Thanks for help.
Great news for mature native hollow-bearing trees.
Rare bird at Cooma.
Magpie-lark, *Grallina cyanoleuca*, by Michael Bedingfield
Close up: 'Weeds' – foe or friend, by John Fitz Gerald
STEP adds to publicity with grant from FOG, by Andy Russell
Cultivation Corner, by Janet Russell
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PO Box 440
Jamison Centre ACT 2614