



Sept & Oct Events

Open Day at Franklin Grassland

Sun 6 Sept, 10am-noon

Narrandera weekend

Fri-Mon 25-28 Sep

Bioblitz with Young Rangers

Sun 18 Oct, 10am-noon

"Wandiyali" near Goongong.

Sat 31 Oct, 9.30 am
(half or full day)

Work Parties

Franklin Grassland

Thursdays 3 & 17 Sept,
1 & 15 Oct.

1.15-3.15pm

Register with
margaret.ning@fog.org.au

Stirling Park

Sun 13 Sep & 11 Oct,

9am-12.30pm

Register with:
jamie.pittock@fog.org.au

Yarramundi Grassland

Sun 13 Sep

9am to 11.30am

Register with:
jamie.pittock@fog.org.au.

Coming up...

Best of Monaro TSRs weekend

Sat-Sun 14-15
November

More information on
pages 14 & 15

www.fog.org.au



From the President ...

This has been the busiest period I have experienced in FOG.

FOG received two grants. The first was an ACT Environment Grant for FOG's work at Blue Gum Point. Congratulations to Jamie et al for putting this successful application together and a big thanks to the ACT Government for providing the opportunity to commence work at Blue Gum Point. FOG also received a Chief Minister's Grant which will assist in our work at Hall Cemetery. A thanks to John Fitz Gerald for doing the legwork on this, to the Chief Minister, and to Michael Pettersson MLA who did much to facilitate the grant.

With sales of *Grassland Flora* still surpassing expectations, the committee agreed to issue a third edition. Thanks to Sarah for doing the legwork on this and for her work on preparing the third edition, a not inconsiderable task.

Our advocacy work has experienced a heavy period and Naarilla's advocacy report reveals the large number of issues we have dealt with. We were somewhat vindicated for the large efforts that we earlier put into the audit and review of the EPBC Act. The reports have both underscored the points we made in our submissions - see Naarilla's piece on the EPBC Act. FOG pulled together a major campaign on the Defence Housing Australia's proposal to build on a large area of NTG at Lawson North. A large group met many times to decide what our strategy should be. Some 28 organisations and 82 individuals signed the letter that went to DHA asking it to reconsider its proposal.

Despite Covid 19 restrictions, we have had some amazing events. Our winter event broke new ground both in content and use of both zoom and in person attendance, with a record 35 people attending this event. There have been numerous visits to sites and work parties. These include a large contingent at St Marks and solo and small work parties eager to deal with weed issues and to assess new sites.

FOG was quick to respond to the possibility of getting involved with the management of TSRs. The response from our membership and friends was truly amazing with many offers of on ground and financial support. FOG will now accept tax-deductible donations to support this work.

In our last issue, I pleaded for assistance for help and had some very positive responses which will hopefully spread the workload. Another request is to people who would like to be amateur journalists. FOG receives many reports and much information which needs to be turned into usable short items for inclusion in our newsletter and Facebook page. If you would like to try your hand, please contact me.

With the amazing volume of activity, we have a large newsletter, but we have had to hold over much material for another time.

Geoff Robertson

Hall Cemetery on a recent winter afternoon with a lovely display of red-brown kangaroo grass. The cemetery has been the site of a huge FOG effort through our winter months.



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Welcome to our new members!

Mervyn & Elizabeth Dorrough – ACT

Aldo Penbrook – Vic

Trevor Preston - ACT

& Sarah Ryan



Murrumbateman Cemetery visit page 4 – Photo by Jiyan

Recent FOG Events

Theodore Grassland & Five-minute grass - Margaret Ning Sun 7 June

What better grassland site to take a couple of people to, for a couple of hours, than the Theodore axe grooves site?

In the March-April 2019 News of Friends of Grasslands (page 10), I wrote "Theodore grassland, part of Tuggeranong Hill Nature Reserve, is a lovely grassland that I have visited four times in the last two years. The site is a curious mix of grassland and grassy woodland areas, with the latter including some very rocky parts that scream 'pink-tailed worm lizard'. In an open area of the grassland, you can find Theodore's axe-grinding grooves, an important piece of cultural heritage."

It is an open area, surrounded by woodland on one side, adjacent to the Monaro Highway, and you pass the axe grooves on your way to the central part of the grassland. It has an extremely wide range of grass species, and the most Yellow Rush Lily (*Tricoryne elatior*) and Common Fringe-sedge (*Fimbristylis dichotoma*) I have seen on any site.

Given the season we have had since February, I was curious to see what Theodore looked like currently. We were instantly surrounded by a wide expanse of haying off Cotton Panic (*Digitaria brownii*) and the wispy remains of Five-Minute Grass (*Tripogonella loliiformis*), which has had a good season in many Canberra grasslands this year.

The grassland still has its inter-tussock spaces, although they were filling with a wide range small exotic plant species, with a much higher proportion of great mullein than I would like to see anywhere. There were a lot of cryptogams around.

And it was good to see that the ALG and briars have been treated recently. The February rains allowed us to add one new native species (the Five-minute grass) to the plant list for the site, and there are now 79 native plant species on it (not counting the native escapees from nearby gardens). Nineteen of these are native grass species! It was very interesting to look at the site after a lot of rain has fallen.



Murrumbateman Village Grassy Woodland

Sat 20 June

At 2pm six Canberra FOG members travelled to Murrumbateman Village Grassy Woodland to be welcomed by Annaliese Caston (Murrumbateman Landcare Group which co-organised the event) and Andrew Hall.



The 4.4ha site contains extensive areas of Yellow Box - Blakely's Red gum woodland and species-rich Themeda grasslands. Annaliese

has actively sought the advice of many experts, who have assisted to compile the truly amazing species list, and grants to control a large area of serrated tussock.

The plant species list includes four orchid species, many lily species (including milkmaids, and rush and fringe lilies), many daisy species (including yam daisies), several pea species and many other

favourite forbs such as creamy candles and a prolific number of drosera, six wattle species and thirteen native grass species.



An excellent place to go armed with a copy of *Grassland Flora* - Annaliese's species list includes many birds, frogs and reptiles, including a species of legless lizard. Cryptogams are extensive and we saw several fungi species, including a star. Last November there was a large number of Golden sun moth. Alan summed up our reaction to what we saw with a single word "wow".

St Marks Grassland clean up - Sarah Sharp

Wed 24 June

On a lovely sunny winter's day, we met at St Marks Grassland to clean up weeds and litter in this iconic natural grassland. Of these, six were FOG members, three were the landscape gardeners from the site and the remaining ten were associated directly or indirectly with the St Marks Theological College and Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture. It was wonderful that so many people were interested in the grassland. After providing an overview of the significance of the grassland in the natural and cultural landscape, we divided into four groups to do some work.

Management of this grassland is guided by a management plan, that includes burning it for ecological purposes, and this

working party addressed some of the other management matters. The main weeds targeted were Flatweed and Ribwort, invasive Grevilleas and Blue Gum seedlings. Another group began the task of removal of heavy bark and branch litter under the mature Blue Gum that was inhibiting growth of many species, including the endangered Button Wrinklewort population.

The wonderful crew agreed that they enjoyed the morning's work and learnt a lot about why the grassland is being kept, how to identify some of the rare grassland species and how to keep the weeds low.

There was a lot of enthusiasm to undertake follow-up at the site, so Margaret Ning will be organising a second working bee this winter, a group of volunteers will continue to remove the tree litter and take away the material removed, and a visit in spring to observe the array of wildflowers will also be organised. If enthusiasm continues there are many other opportunities that will be pursued further with Charles Sturt University and ACCC.



Above: Basal leaves of a Greenhood orchid

Below: Button Wrinklewort - J. Bell



Murrumbateman Cemetery - Alan Ford

Sun 5 July

A handful of FOG members visited this cemetery on Sunday afternoon and were welcomed by Annaliese (Murrumbateman Landcare Group) who showed us part of the Plan for the Cemetery (see photo by Jiyan). Unfortunately, it appears that they are to develop one part of the cemetery.

We headed for the Themeda Grassland at the southern end of the site. We had to negotiate the ubiquitous onion grass that unfortunately infests part of the cemetery.

We then entered the Themeda with its two versions of Common Everlasting, a green- and a grey-leaved version. This area also contained rosettes of Scaly Button, Yam Daisy and Blue Devil, and the leaves of Milkmaid, Fringe Lily, Bulbine Lily and Creamy Candles. It had Sundews, Woodrush and Geranium, a moss and a few orchid leaves (greenhood and onion).

We hope to return later in the year to see the spring flowering.

Yass plant ID course with Alison Elvin – *Alice Bauer*

Sat 18 July

The day kicked-off with a session on Plant Identification. With an alluring array of plants, branches and flowers spread along three large tables, Alison went through and explained main ID traits to look for. She taught us how to distinguish one group from another (i.e. wattles, from wattle look-alikes, Hakea from Grevillea and etc), tips for approaching the difficult art of Eucalyptus ID, and shared info on the best field guides for the region.

The next session was on seed collecting. Alison shared her experience (much of it!!), in collecting native seed. She



explained how grass/shrub and tree seed is harvested, the need and methods of drying and storing seed correctly, and even had an entire table filled with bags of native

seed for us to look at!

The event was successful in social distancing (even bringing personal coffee cups!). The venue was cosy, and the audience of land-holders, university students, ACT PCS staff and FOG members contributed to interesting discussion throughout.

The whole way Alison enthusiastically shared her knowledge and passion- and every one of us left feeling greatly enriched for it.

Winter presentations with Sarah & Jamie

Sunday 25 July

Our winter presentation was attended by 20 people at Mugga Mugga Education Centre and a further 15 via zoom.

Sarah Bates, PhD student, FOG member and recent recipient of a FOG grassy ecosystem grant, enlightened us with her presentation on the the role of plant and soil microbe interaction in weed invasion in grassy ecosystems. Her interest is to explore how different species of exotic and native grasses interact with each other and with soil microbes to give us insights into how best to improve of management of our indigenous grassy ecosystems.

She began her presentation explaining what is known about soil microbe communities, how plants can influence them and how they impact on plant performance. She showed a number of slides which clearly explained these complex relationships. The second part of her presentation, and the focus in her PhD, is to explore what is known from various studies of how some invasive species thrive in soil microbe communities found in indigenous ecosystems, while other thrive in highly modified ecosystems, and some appear to be indifferent.

The final part of her presentation explained her approach and preliminary results. She is growing combinations of selected exotic and native grass species in pot plants in soils that are taken native grasslands, exotic grasslands or a combination of both. Her preliminary results provide insights into how these

different soil conditions, with their associated microbes, seem to encourage, or not, absolute and relative performance of particular species of exotic and native grass species. We hope to get a fuller explanation of her work in future issues of the newsletter.

Jamie was asked to talk about leadership in the environment movement. The advertising for this event outlined his personal and professional history and the questions that he should address, and so this information is not repeated here.

Jamie showed us four slides, each of which represented a different learning experience for him in his evolution as an environmental advocate. The first showed a scene of a large Orbest forest protest in which Jamie was one of the organisers. Then, as a long-haired youth, he was beginning to realise that it was necessary to build bridges not only with those with whom you who agree, but also with those you don't.

His second slide captured images of his time as an employee of National Parks Association of Victoria. He outlined the Victorian government's approach to mapping vegetation. He noticed the maps showed large blank areas which came to realise with native grasslands. Thus begun his advocacy for grasslands to ensure that these communities were recognised, mapped and included as part of the conservation estate.

His third slide centred around his involvement in Wabba Wilderness Park, a 100m ha wetland, and his association with Dennis Landenbergue. He described Dennis' approach to win over politicians one by one.

Jamie's fourth slide was his association with Monte Hamill (WWF Canada). Jamie talked about Monty's ten-point approach to advocacy work. These included: being politically non-partisan, being non-ideological, being efficient, getting results, being scientifically accurate, doing our homework well, checking someone else's homework, staying within our area of expertise, trying cooperative approach first, following due process internally, taking the highroad, and being prepared to say no. Jamie related to his own experiences in dealing with the then new Howard government and how we found allies which lead to a continued investment in supporting grassland ecosystems. Jamie found the 'values and approaches he was describing were clear in Friends or Grasslands' approach to advocacy.



The complexity of a home and away (zoom) presentation.

Photo: Andrew Zelnik

To sum up, the two presentations allowed us to explore new areas of knowledge which should assist us to strengthen our approach to supporting grass ecosystems.

The event was not without some troubles. At one stage as the audience could not see the shared screen and later our second computer ran out of juice also causing problems for our zoom audience. Hence apologies to them. However, the split home and away audience allowed us to reach a larger audience and hopefully our zoom skills will improve with time.

Ainslie & Mullangari grasslands – Sarah Sharp

Sun 26 Jul & Sat 1 August

More informal visits have been undertaken by FOG members to check out important sites. On 26 July six members visited the former CSIRO Ainslie grassland and prepared a plant list, while on 1 Aug a group of five visited Mullangari grassland look for orchids.

News Roundup

Franklin Grassland Reserve

Geoff Robertson

In our last issue we reported Minister Mick Gentleman's announcement (23 May) that "Canberra's newest reserve - Franklin Grasslands in Gungahlin and on our regular working bees.

Since then, a draft master plan has been prepared and now there is a survey and a consultation to obtain comments on the plan. In addition, an open day is planned for 10am to noon Sunday 6 September (see advertisement page 14). Please read the advertisement and maybe readers can assist. At least please turn up to show your support for this newest grassland reserve and for FOG's work there.

We have also continued our working bees there, held 1.15-3.15pm on alternative Thursdays. We held another in June, in addition to those mentioned last time, and two in July. We took a break in August. More are planned in September and October (see page 14) for details.



Have ...

YOURsay
Community conversations

On the Draft

Landscape
Plan and
survey



redback design group
01328 811111
info@redbackdesigngroup.com.au
104 10280 Canberra Drive of Canberra ACT
2616 ACT 2616
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FRANKLIN GRASSLANDS
Landscape Plan
Remington Road Entry Artists Impressions
1581 5 August 2020

Blue Gum Point Project

Jamie Pittock

The ACT Government has awarded an Environment Grant of \$20,856 in FY21 to Friends of Grasslands to restore grassy woodlands at Blue Gum Point (east) in Yarralumla.

FOG will work with ACT City Services to restore ~8 hectares of box-gum grassy woodland, an ecological community that is listed as nationally endangered. The site contains populations of the nationally endangered Button Wrinklewort (*Rutidosia leptorhynchoides*) and Golden Sun Moth (*Synemon plana*). A rare population of Buloke (*Allocasuarina luehmannii*) will also be conserved through supplementary planting. The work will extend the restoration of flora and fauna habitat from adjoining land at Gurubang Dhaura – Stirling Park.



Minister Mick Gentleman MLA announcing the ACT Environment Grants at Blue Gum Point. Photo - JP

Most of the funds will be used to employ contractors to undertake weed spraying and removal of large woody weeds. FOG volunteers will undertake follow up control of herbaceous and woody weeds, lake shore planting and rubbish removal. FOG has scheduled two volunteer work parties, namely for weeding on 8th November 2020 and planting on 14th March 2021. Please contact Jamie Pittock if you wish to help with this work: Jamie.pittock@fog.org.au

Jallukar Native Grasslands Project

Geoff Robertson

Greening Australia (GA) reported (June 15) on the Jallukar Native Grasslands Project, organised by GA and Jallukar Landcare, with assistance from Wimmera CMA, in which volunteers over four years, beginning 2016, collected seeds from native grassland species and propagated these species in the group's nursery near Pomonal, Victoria. Workshops gave participants the knowledge and confidence to collect seed, resulting in over 30 species collected (from a diversity of locations).

The seed mix contained different species of native seed "like a giant seed muesli!" and contained 50kg of twelve different grass species, both summer and winter active species, mixed with 20kg of common herb layer – some rare and some common. The seed mix was created by putting the seed into a seed mixer, built by the team, specifically for this project. In May, this seed was used to sow a 1.6-hectare area. By spring, hopefully, the volunteers will be able to celebrate a job well done once the seeds begin to sprout. If you would like to join the Jallukar Landcare email list or facebook page please contact [Angela Turrell](mailto:Angela.Turrell@jallukarlandcare.org.au) from Jallukar Landcare, and become part of their grasslands journey! Angela reported to FOG "now we are continuing to collect seed, propagate and identify sites for planting in the Jallukar Landcare region".

Meeting with NCA

Jamie Pittock

FOG met with National Capital Authority Chief Executive, Sally Barnes, and colleagues on 7 July to discuss conservation of grassy ecosystems.

We reiterated our thanks to the NCA for leading rehabilitation of the pine plantation on the western side of Stirling Park – Gurubang Dhaura so professionally. FOG has suggested a joint community planting day in March 2021 to complete the revegetation of this ~5 ha site in Yarralumla.

FOG raised our desire to see as much as possible of the land at Stirling Park – Gurubang Dhaura rezoned from 'national capital purposes' to a status that conserves cultural and natural values. The NCA may consider a revised evaluation of cultural and natural values across its estate.

We raised our concerns at the apparent legal limitations for NCA enforcement of standard practices for good land management and community behaviour, such as to prevent and penalise rubbish dumping, vehicle use off roads, and unauthorised building works. We have provided the NCA with examples and the NCA is exploring this issue.

FOG also raised the biodiversity conservation values that may be impacted by the proposed Lawson housing development. The NCA as the planning authority outlined the approvals process for the proposed development.

We will seek updates from the NCA on these issues after the Authority's October meeting. FOG has now had a partnership agreement with the NCA for 12 years, which has resulted in greater activities to conserve grassy ecosystems at Stirling Park – Gurubang Dhaura, Yarramundi Reach and other sites.

Top Hut TSR LLS Management Lease

Margaret Ning

FOG is pleased to announce that it has been granted a five-year lease on Top Hut Travelling Stock Reserve, Dry Plains Rd, 30 kilometres north west of Cooma. If you would like an idea of what the reserve looks like, and why we decided to apply for the management lease, there is a photograph of it on the cover of Grassland Flora. Yes, **that** magnificent grassland site; and it is rated as extremely high conservation value by Rainer Rehwinkel.

Other recently granted TSR leases over 'extremely high conservation value' reserves, include Gegedzerick TSR (half of the lease to Upper Snowy Landcare), Maffra Lake, and 15 Mile Bobundra Rd TSR (Ravensworth).

Having decided not to sell off the State's TSRs en masse, South East Local Land Services (SE LLS) is now prepared to grant leases to applicants like FOG who will appreciate their high quality conservation status, and manage them for their ecological values, with weed control and sympathetic biomass management. FOG will also be responsible for fencing of the Top Hut TSR (TH TSR) site, starting with a 15m portion that is down, and feral animal control.

It may be possible to extend FOG's involvement in this TSR leasing process, as SE LLS envisages that the new leasing process will continue over the next five years. Accordingly, a small group of FOG members is attempting to determine whether there are any other extremely high conservation status TSR leases that FOG could apply for. The criteria for

taking them on, would be extremely high conservation status reserves that would not impose too onerous a workload on FOG and any members who are interested in being part of the process. Some other FOG members have already shown an interest in taking on the management of TSR leases of 'extremely high conservation value', and we encourage any other FOG members who would be interested in being part of this exciting initiative to get in touch with Geoff or me to discuss.

At the time of applying for the TH TSR lease (May-June 2020), some FOG members were aware of what was happening, and made offers of financial and other assistance (eg fencing expertise), as there are expenses associated with the whole lease process. There is a one-off admin fee, annual lease fees, and we also envisage fencing, chemical and possibly feral animal control costs.

If any other FOG members would like to make a donation to the FOG public fund to help cover the five years of on-going costs of managing TSR lease(s) taken on by FOG, you can make a tax deductible donation, but indicate that you want the monies to go to FOG's TSR project (see donations box below). We envisage that any surplus funds received will be spent on other FOG on-ground projects like Hall Cemetery, Franklin Grassland, etc. There will be regular updates in the FOG newsletter of all developments, and opportunities for visits to the TSRs will be advertised.

Donations to support FOG

FOG makes small grants to researchers, educators and on-ground projects, known as grassy ecosystem grants, a highly effective way to support grassy ecosystems. It also supports FOG's TSR project.

To support these projects, you can make a tax-deductible donation to FOG Public Fund by:

Direct debit: BSB 633 000, A/c 153493960 (Bendigo Bank). Please include your name and advise our Treasurer treasurer@fog.org.au.

Cheque: payable to 'Friends of Grasslands Public Fund', mailed to Treasurer, Friends of Grasslands Inc., PO Box 440, Jamison Centre, ACT 2614. Include your name and postal address.

Note: if you want your donation to go to the TSR project please indicate this when you make your donation.

A receipt for tax purposes will be sent to you. You may also include a donation when you complete your membership application/renewal form.

THANKS

New Grassland App

Geoff Robertson

Nicholas Williams has released a free app, available for iPad & iPhone, [Grasslands Biodiversity of Southeast Australia](#), funded by the Myer Foundation as part of its grassland project. This was a major project with numerous people playing their parts.



It contains a great deal of information on natural temperate grasslands in south east Australia; 8 endangered grassland communities, including two grassy wetland communities, over 500 flora descriptions and over 200 fauna descriptions all with images and selected bird and frog calls, distribution maps from the Atlas of Living Australia, details of 25 easily accessible grassland sites to visit, representative of grassland communities, links from grassland sites to the species guide. It is impressive!

The Southern Highlands Region includes 8 local grassland sites, including Dunlop, Jarramlee, Mulangari, West Jerrabomberra (ACT), and Kuma, Old Cooma Common, Queanbeyan and Turallo (NSW).

If you download the app, it is suggested that you do this when connected to a wifi network as it is a large app. To download go to Ecolinc Science and Technology Innovations Centre and then click on "Grasslands BSEA". Nick hopes that future updates will hopefully include more grasslands and asks people to contact him if they wish to contribute.

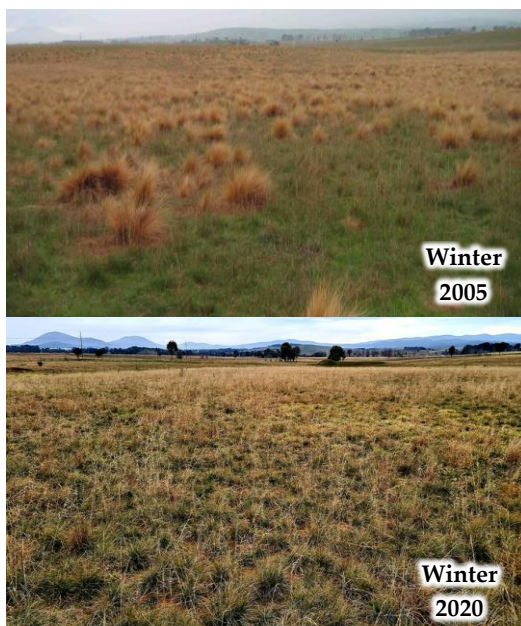
Winning the fight against Serrated Tussock

Steve Taylor, ACT Parks' Invasive Plants Program Leader, recently shared some fantastic results of a long-term restoration program at West Jerrabomberra Nature Reserve. In 2005, the area was dominated by the invasive grass Serrated Tussock (*Nassella trichotoma*).

Initial knockdown was undertaken by spot spraying with spray lances using 1L glyphosate 360 to 100L water plus a wetter. Consistent follow-up control has occurred once a year for the 15 years that followed.

The area is now dominated by Tall Spear Grass and Red Grass – a

successful restoration project. Careful follow-up control works!



Namadgi NP Bushfire Recovery

Geoff Robertson

On 22 July I attended a bush fire recovery tour (Covid safe) to Namadgi NP, organised by Lori Gould and hosted by Brett McNamara (ACT Parks & Conservation Service), as a representative of Friends of Grasslands, to see the impact of the 2020 fire and the slow recovery, and to begin the discussion about how groups like ours might contribute to its recovery, especially using our plant ID skills and knowledge of restoration.

Before the tour began, Brett treated us to an amazing slideshow illustrating the impact of the 2020 fire and describing the amazing effort to keep the fire away from Canberra and to divert it around important built and biodiversity assets.

The ecological issues to be faced in the recovery include soil run off and sedimentation, overgrazing by kangaroos and deer, damaged by horses, weeds, and identifying the impact of the fire on populations of endangered and rare plant species. The images show some of what we saw. The image of the rock is one I find fascinating, as it shows the burnt rock on top, with a layer under that of newly exposed rock resulting from the washing away of the soil. See our FB page for more.



Down at Ground Level

John Fitz Gerald

Unfortunately volunteering at the Botanic Gardens continues to stay just out of reach, which means I can't bring you new images from their wonderful microscope. Undeterred though, I've been pointing my camera at tiny plants in this warm damp autumn and winter. Here are three examples for your enjoyment.

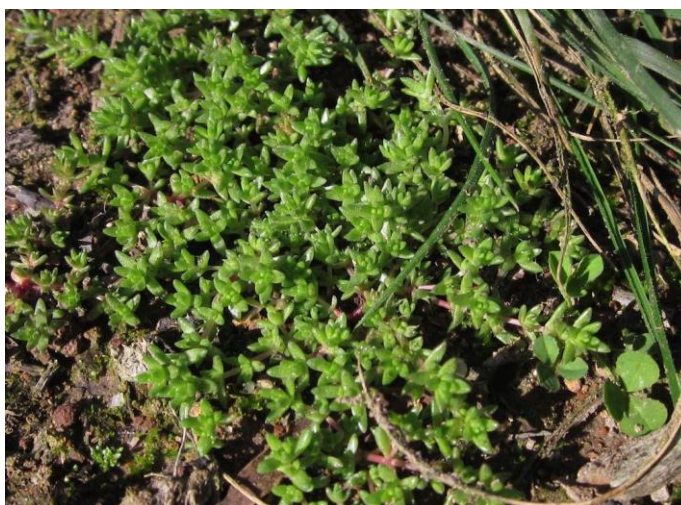
Crassula sieberiana, Australian Stonecrop, has grown extensive mats in some open places, often with shallow soils. In fertile spots the mats are a brilliant green, in tougher spots they tend to be rusty red. Closeup, masses of small succulent leaves can be seen attached to longer reddish stems. (pic 1)

Drosera hookeri, one of the sundews, is drawing attention in other open spaces. Plantnet notes the basal rosette of this species has leaves of yellow-green. (pic 2). It seems that many of us (including me) could recently have paid too-little attention to this character and over-reported *D. peltata*.

Riccia subbifurca, a liverwort. This species has flourished at Yarramundi Grassland and elsewhere forming many bright green, patterned mats in the intertussock spaces (pic 3). As soon as several days with dry weather set in, the mats dry out, plant-colour fades and the plants shrink. Chris Cargill and Heino Lepp at ANBG identified the species in my photo submitted to Canberra Nature Map early in May.



Drosera hookeri - Hall Cemetery, central graves area.



Crassula sieberiana - Hall Cemetery woodland



Riccia subbifurca- Yarramundi
Grassland.

A soil-hugging cover of liverwort with an awned Kangaroo Grass seed as scale and as indication of how close the plant grows to tall grass tussocks.

FOG Advocacy

Naarilla Hirsch

July

In an EPBC referral concerning the duplication of William Hovell Drive, FOG noted significant impacts on several Matters of National Environmental Significance, including the Golden Sun Moth, Pink Tailed Worm Lizard, Box Gum Woodland and Superb Parrot. FOG made a number of recommendations to mitigate impacts and to offset against impacts including avoiding loss of mature eucalypt trees over 50 cm in diameter, better integration with surrounding Woodland Restoration initiatives at the landscape scale, and new edge plantings along all currently treed areas, ensuring that such plantings enhance native species habitat values in the landscape.

The House of Representatives is undertaking an inquiry into the problem of feral and domestic cats in Australia. FOG drew attention to cat containment in the ACT and our recommendation about the *Draft ACT Cat Plan 2019-29* that cat containment should extend across the whole of the ACT as soon as possible. We suggested that the ideal situation is for cat containment to extend to all urban areas within Australia, and that both compliance and enforcement are very important and need to be resourced adequately.

We have received feedback from the NSW Threatened Species Scientific Committee on our January 2020 submission regarding the Preliminary Determination relating to the White Box – Yellow Box – Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland (WBYBBRG Woodland). The Committee amended the determination in response to a number of the issues FOG raised. The changes included amending and clarifying the bioregions where this ecological community occurs, adding/removing some species as we suggested, including information on the unknown rates of clearing of understorey species and derived grasslands, and including information on variation in the canopy cover. The Committee has made a Final Determination to list White Box – Yellow Box – Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the NSW North Coast, New England Tableland, Nandewar, Brigalow Belt South, Sydney Basin, South Eastern Highlands, NSW South Western Slopes, South East Corner and Riverina Bioregions as a critically endangered ecological community.

August

FOG provided comments to the NSW government on the draft State Strategic Plan for Crown Land. These included pointing out a lack of clarity about whether or not Travelling Stock Reserves (TSRs) are part of the Crown Lands the document is about, and expressing concern that the only discussion of using Crown lands for conservation of landscapes and species was via offsets. FOG asked for greater transparency and clarity around several matters, including the likely weighting process likely to be applied to stakeholder submissions and summary data for each Division of the various Crown land types, usages/values/benefits, and so on. FOG recommended that generally more be said about the importance of Crown lands containing high quality

threatened ecological communities and habitat for threatened species.

North Lawson

Defence Housing Australia ran public information sessions about a proposed housing estate in the eastern section of North Lawson (much of which is the former Belconnen Naval Transmission Station). Stage 1 of the proposal would develop the area of the former buildings on the site and is allowed under the NCA's Development Control Plan (DCP) 12/09. Stage 2 would develop areas currently zoned as for nature conservation, including most of the Kangaroo Grass grasslands in the east of the site. We were advised that an EPBC referral would be put to the Commonwealth and proposed changes to DCP 12/09 put to NCA to allow the development to proceed.

FOG, together with the Conservation Council and others concerned about this development, put together a letter to go to the Managing Director of Defence Housing Australia (and cc'd to a number of others including Commonwealth defence and environment Ministers, ACT environment Minister, the NCA and the CSE), signed by a long list of concerned organisations and individuals. Arguments against the proposed development were about the significant conservation values of the eastern part of North Lawson, including it being one of the most extensive Kangaroo Grass communities surviving in the ACT, a population of Striped Legless Lizard, and habitat for threatened bird species. The letter called for Defence Housing Australia to reconsider proceeding with the proposed development so as to ensure ongoing protection, conservation and enhancement of the endangered ecological communities and species on the site.

The full text of these submissions appears on our website.

EPBC Audit & Review

Naarilla Hirsch

The EPBC Act is important in our fight to conserve our grassy ecosystems and dependent species. Without it and the matching State/Territory legislation, development impacting on native grasslands would go ahead without any constraints. However, over my years as FOG's advocacy coordinator I have found the EPBC process at times frustrating, stressful (in part due to the very short timelines for submissions about complex matters), and disappointing (very few development proposals are not approved – the best we can hope for is reasonable conditions/offsets on each approval). So the past nine months have been interesting in that we've had the opportunity to put our views both to the Auditor General as part of his audit of the EPBC processes, and to the ten yearly independent review of the EPBC Act. Both of these have released reports of their findings recently.

EPBC audit

Some of the general conclusions of the Auditor General following his audit of the EPBC processes were that the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment's administration of referrals, assessments and approvals of controlled actions under the EPBC Act is not effective. In particular, the Department's regulatory approach is not proportionate to environmental risk, the administration of

referrals and assessments is not effective or efficient, and conditions of approval are not assessed with rigour, are non-compliant with procedural guidance and contain clerical or administrative errors.

A little bit of information I extracted from the ANOA report: up until 30 June 2019 6,253 referrals had been received under the EPBC Act. Of these, 81% have been approved, but only 16.5% with conditions imposed on that approval. A miniscule number (21) have been rejected. There are 18% of referrals that have either lapsed, been withdrawn, or the assessment is still being undertaken.

The audit's recommendations are top level so do not address many of FOG's concerns as expressed in our submission. Some of the issues we raised were covered in the report, a couple were covered in the interview mentioned a bit later in this article, and some not covered at all.

A few of the Auditor General's recommendations are that the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment should

- develop and implement a plan to collect and use regulatory information, and address gaps and limitations in information management, to better enable compliance information to be used to inform regulatory strategy and decision-making;
- conduct an up-to-date risk assessment of non-compliance across its environmental regulatory regimes and develop and implement arrangements to prioritise its strategic compliance assessments;
- ensure that its oversight of referrals, assessments and approvals is conducted in accordance with procedures, and conflict-of-interest risks are identified and treated; and
- improve its quality controls to ensure conditions of approval are enforceable, appropriate for monitoring, compliant with internal procedures and aligned with risk to the environment.

Although not specifically included in the recommendations, the Auditor General raised several concerns with environmental offset plans, noting the significant increase in the use of offsets since commencement of the EPBC Act (to about 80% of referrals approved with conditions). These included the lack of quality assurance process for sampling or reviewing approved offset plans and the lack of an agreed method for estimating risk of biodiversity loss. Another is the inability of proponents to satisfy conditions due to offset unavailability, which has resulted in variations or extensions to offset conditions, and also the acceptance of a higher proportion of indirect offsets, both increasing the risk that the desired environmental gains will not be achieved.

The report also points out that two of the Department's policies include commitments to undertake evaluations that have not been completed. The EPBC Act environmental offsets policy started in 2012 with a technical review due after one year and subsequent reviews every five years. The report states that "The Department commenced the first technical review in 2015. A consultation paper was produced but not approved by the Minister, who requested 'more time to consider'. No further work has been completed." The *One-Stop Shop* policy does not explicitly commit to evaluations but involves implementing bilateral agreement. These

agreements are required to be reviewed every five years under the EPBC Act, but the reviews have not commenced.

I'm not sure if it has come out of the audit, but the Department has been undertaking interviews of users (both proponents and those like FOG who use the completed forms) to "explore our needs and expectations of the EPBC Act referral form and process". Geoff and I took part in one of these, expressing some concerns and making some suggestions about the form, the process and the website. It gave us the opportunity to talk about the short timeframes for public comment and discuss ways to at least get early notification of new referrals (at the moment I check the EPBC website twice a week for relevant referrals so we don't lose too much of the comment period).

EPBC review

An interim report of the Independent Review of the EPBC Act being undertaken by Professor Graeme Samuel AC has been published, with the opportunity available to provide additional comments and concerns not already submitted or in the interim report. FOG will not be making another submission since the issues we have with the EPBC Act have been covered in the interim report.

The report is very dense. What follows are some of the key points from the discussion of issues of most interest to FOG (or at least to the Advocacy Group). Further detail and discussion of other issues can be found at <https://epbcreview.environment.gov.au/resources/interim-report>.

The report states that "The environment and our iconic places are in decline and under increasing threat. The EPBC Act does not enable the Commonwealth to effectively protect and conserve nationally important environmental matters". Significant efforts are made to assess and list threatened species. However, once listed, not enough is done to deliver improved outcomes for them. Key reasons for this include the Act lacking clear national outcomes and effective mechanisms to address environmental decline, not facilitating the restoration of the environment, and opportunities for coordinated national action to address key environmental challenges being ad hoc rather than a key national priority. Decision-making is focused on processes and individual projects and does not adequately address cumulative impacts or emerging threats. Environmental offsets have serious shortcomings, having become the default rather than the exception after all practical options to avoid or mitigate impacts have been exhausted.

The key reform directions proposed by the Review are legally enforceable National Environmental Standards; the Act supporting a focus on protecting (avoiding impact), conserving (minimising impact) and restoring the environment; a greater focus on adaptive planning such as developing regional plans that support the management of cumulative threats; and developing strategic national plans for big-ticket, nationally pervasive issues.

In the main, decisions that determine environmental outcomes are made on a project-by-project basis, and only when impacts exceed a certain size. This means that cumulative impacts on the environment are not systematically considered, and the overall result is net environmental decline, rather than protection and

conservation. The regional (landscape) plans proposed by the Review should support the management of threats at the right scale and set clear rules to facilitate and manage competing land uses.

The operation of the EPBC Act needs to shift from permitting gradual decline, to halting decline and restoring the environment, so that development can continue in a sustainable way. Active mechanisms are required to restore areas of degraded or lost habitat to achieve the net gain for the environment that is needed, with available habitat growing to be able to support both development and a healthy environment.

Environmental offsets are often poorly designed and implemented, delivering an overall net loss for the environment. While the intent of the offsets policy is to encourage proponents to exhaust reasonable options to avoid or mitigate impacts, in practice, offsets have become the default negotiating position and a standard condition of approval, rather than only used to address residual impacts. Offsets do not offset the impact of development, and overall there is a net loss of habitat. Proponents are permitted to clear habitat in return for protecting other areas of the same habitat from future development, but it is generally not clear if the area set aside for the offset is at risk from future development. Offsets need to include a greater focus on restoration and should be enshrined in the law. The EPBC Act should require that offsets only be considered when options to avoid and then mitigate impacts have been demonstrably exhausted. Where applied, offsets should deliver genuine restoration, avoiding a net loss of habitat.

While the Act includes some requirements for monitoring and reporting, these are not comprehensive and follow-through is largely focused on bare minimum administrative reporting, rather than genuine monitoring and evaluation of outcomes. Thus key reforms proposed by the Review are the establishment of National Environmental Standards and of regional plans. As well, a revamp of State of Environment reporting is proposed, and national environmental economic accounts suggested as a useful tool for tracking Australia's progress to achieve ecologically sustainable development.

With regard to compliance, the report notes that there has been limited activity to enforce the EPBC Act over the 20-year period it has been in effect, with serious enforcement actions rarely used. When issued, penalties are not commensurate with the harm of damaging a public good of national interest. The report recommends establishment and proper resourcing of an independent compliance and enforcement regulator that is not subject to actual or implied direction from the Commonwealth Minister.

The Review considers that the EPBC Act is not fulfilling its objectives as they relate to the role of Indigenous Australians in protecting and conserving biodiversity and heritage, and promoting the respectful use of their knowledge.

The Review does not support the many proposals received to broaden the environmental matters dealt with in the EPBC Act as it considers this would result in muddled responsibilities, leading to poor accountability, duplication and inefficiency.

The report notes that community and industry do not trust the EPBC Act and its implementation. This lack of trust lay

behind calls for independent institutions to be established to make decisions under the EPBC Act, but this solution is not supported by the Review. The Review considers that it is entirely appropriate that elected representatives make decisions that require competing values to be weighed and competing national objectives to be balanced. Instead, the Review recommends that the statutory advisory committee structures in the EPBC Act should be recast, with an Ecologically Sustainable Development Committee being established.

The Melbourne Strategic (Grassland) Assessment

Geoff Robertson

There are a growing number of examples of how environment laws fail to protect our grasslands. Amongst the most outstanding examples is the failure of the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments to safeguard natural temperate grasslands on the fringe of Melbourne, according to an article by Royce Millar and Miki Perkins in the Melbourne Age 24 July and an earlier article by Miki Perkins of 18 June.

A decade ago, the basalt plains on the fringe of Melbourne had many "patches of grassland — tall, fast-growing spears of native grasses interspersed with lilies, daisies and other native herbs" together with the critically endangered animals that sheltered in them. However, Melbourne suburbs were expanding in that direction.

In 2008 and 2009, the Commonwealth listed the state's native temperate grasslands and grassy eucalypt woodlands — remnant ecosystems common in Melbourne's northern and western growth corridors — as critically endangered.

In 2010, the Brumby and Rudd governments agreed to Victoria's plan, "the Melbourne Strategic Assessment", to create large reserves, including a 15,000-hectare grassland reserve between Werribee and Little River, north of the Princes Highway (see map). These reserves would offset the smaller patches of grasslands and woodlands bulldozed for urban sprawl. 'According to the 2010 plan, Victoria would create the largest consolidated area of natural temperate grasslands in Australia and protect distinct woodland areas. However, the state government would not agree to up-front compulsory acquisition of private properties within the reserve area, in contrast to its approach when building roads or rail lines.

Instead, it slapped a public acquisition overlay on the land to prevent property owners from developing it and said that by 2020, it would have completed the necessary purchases. We have now reached that deadline year, yet the acquisitions have barely begun.

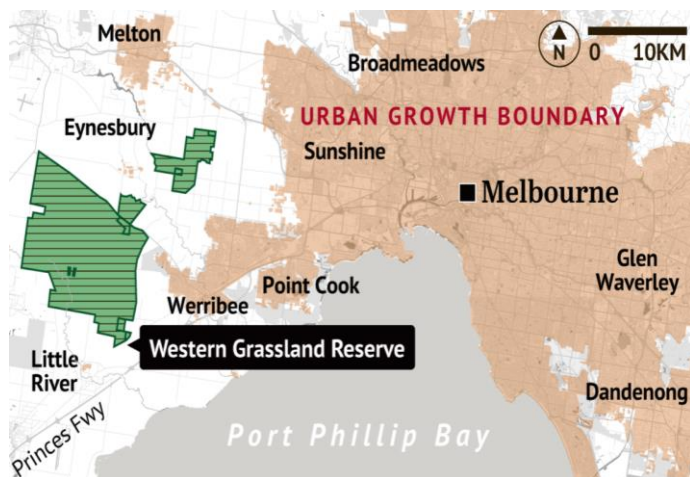
A damning study by Victoria's auditor-general confirmed the government had bought just 10 per cent of the land needed for the grassland reserve — the bulk of it a single purchase of 1000 hectares in 2012 — and none at all for the woodland reserve.'

'The cost of buying properties in the area has skyrocketed, weeds are choking the site and property developers are circling, hoping for a windfall. The state government has caused further doubt by identifying the area around the

reserve for possible quarries to feed stone and sand into Melbourne's "big build" '.

Failures by both Labor and Liberal governments have been roundly criticised by Assoc. Professor Nick Williams (School of Ecosystem and Forest Sciences (Uni of Melbourne), Matt Ruchel (Victorian National Parks Association), Professor Sarah Bekessy (RMIT), and Peter Wlodarczyk, regarded as a local expert on the western grasslands, who believe that the project is in doubt.

The estimated costs of land acquisition now stand at \$2,000m, pushed by speculators hoping for a killing, and the government has revealed it has \$53m in its trust fund. From 1 July, the Victorian government has introduced a new, indexed range of levies to collect up to \$113,441 if a hectare of "native vegetation" is cleared, \$10,005 if a hectare of the critically endangered golden sun moth's habitat is cleared and \$7846 if a hectare of the endangered growling grass frog's habitat is cleared. Environment Minister Lily D'Ambrosio has announced that negotiations were in progress to buy an additional 1900 hectares of land in the reserve.



References

Royce Millar and Miki Perkins 'Madness': How governments failed Victoria's endangered grasslands, the Age 24 Jul 2020, (<https://www.theage.com.au/politics/victoria/madness-how-governments-failed-victoria-s-endangered-grasslands-20200723-p55ewf.html>)

Miki Perkins Broken promises turn fragile grasslands into unprotected 'basket case', the Age, 18 Jun 2020 (<https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/broken-promises-turn-fragile-grasslands-into-unprotected-basketcase-20200617-p553p4.html>)

Jess Adams Melbourne's irreplaceable grasslands are teetering on the edge, the Age 27 Jul 2020 (<https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/melbourne-s-irreplaceable-grasslands-are-teetering-on-the-edge-20200723-p55sept.html?btis>)

Hall Cemetery - Downside of February Rains & Upside of a Pandemic

Margaret Ning & John Fitz Gerald

At the February 2020 Hall Cemetery working bee, FOG members were confronted by an army of (millions of) rapidly growing Milk Thistle (MT) and Prickly Lettuce (PL) in the

Woodlands blocks. We equally rapidly gave a lot of thought as to what we could do about it.

Initially, we decided to systematically snap off all the MT fluffies/flowers and buds **across the whole site**, bag them, and take them away. (Thank goodness for the green bin at home!) Otherwise there was another season's germination then and there. That bought us some time, and we were surprised to find that the act of snapping off the flower heads seemed to cauterise many of the plants' growth, although occasionally new buds grew from the base of the remaining side leaves.

Once the first sweep of the site was completed, we set about removing as many of the remaining MT plants as possible. Many were completely removed, creating a huge biomass of



Stems of Milk Thistle cut at 50cm and immediately daubed. All leaves have eventually withered.

decaying plant matter; another couple of patches were 'slashed' with a sickle and shears to about 20cm in height; while an experimental 50 of them were cut and daubed (50:50 glyph and water) at about 50cm height. 20 or so tall PL were also daubed, in order to see if that was effective and/or sustainable in terms of bending, etc.

We'd like to thank FOG executive for approval to buy a battery powered line trimmer for more slashing. This machine is not only lighter than our petrol brushcutter, it is far quieter and easier to run in tight corners around fallen timber. It has enough power to topple MT and thin PL, and of course is great for young grasses.

I am pleased to say that the cutting and daubing was very effective, on both species, although the MT results take a little while to show the full effect (see pic 1). I also assure you that working on cutting at a height of 50cms is far more comfortable than closer to the ground. The sickled MT and PL also have not regrown. Every week or two, we do another sweep of any maturing MT seedheads/flowers.

Having decided the *modus operandi* was to prevent recruitment of as many species as possible, the next big flowerer was Fumitory and that took four person days' work by a couple of us. And now the Giant Brome, Ryegrass, Phalaris and Fescue are starting to produce their seeds, but not in any significant quantity yet.

We have also had a 'never pass, without removing' policy for **all** individuals of Spear Thistle, Black Nightshade, Common Peppergrass, Patersons Curse, Capeweed, Nodding Thistle, Scotch Thistle and Spear Thistle. Basically, this still leaves an eye-watering amount of exotic Plantain, Flatweed and clover species, and a burgeoning amount of Ryegrass, Brome and Vulpia species for 'down the track'. Oh, and still a few million MT and PL rosettes. What to do with them?

The big experiment to come out of all this is our first major use of the herbicide called Slasher, which is a registered organic herbicide that is glyphosate-free and rapidly kills annual weeds, specifically those with small root systems, basically by an acidic burn. Advantages of the herbicide are that it has no residues and that its effect is clear within 24 hours.



A MT rosette sprayed with Slasher + red dye, 3 days after treatment - a most satisfactory response

Disadvantages include the need to be applied to completely dry leaves, though that's not different to mainstream herbicides. Also, it is very expensive. We have experimented cautiously with it, and are pleased with the results, so much so that a contractor was set to put in a day's work on the MT in the northern part of the cemetery but the recent run of foggy mornings forced postponement due to the wet vegetation. FOG has received a Chief Minister's grant of \$1800 to fund the contractors, and FOG would like to thank him very much for that. The use of this chemical (nonanoic acid, produced in nature by *Pelargoniums*) was in part a concession to Farmer Brown, the operator of free-range egg production in his neighbouring woodland paddocks. Regardless of its organic status, the chemical is completely non-selective, so MT spraying has to be limited to near-calm conditions, due to the high conservation values of the Tarengo Leek Orchid population in the main Cemetery.

There are a lot of people interested in the results of the Slasher application, including Steve Taylor's ACT Weeds team, and the contractors themselves who haven't used it yet, and we all want to see if it does annuals well

Ongoing minor experiments have included:

- spreading a small amount of Flupropanate granules on a couple of newly germinating exotic Plantain patches and one robust *Phalaris* patch. All experimental patches are well away from *Eucalyptus* driplines. Watch this space for the outcome....
- In an effort to minimise soil disturbance, Margaret is pursuing whether flatweed, capeweed and exotic plantain can be whacked out with a shallower cut. The jury is still out.

Back on site at the cemetery, for light relief we sometimes mix things up a bit, and if a native plant is seen trying to poke its head through the weeds, we take time out to liberate it in its little patch. This has included improving the lot of obscure *Einadia nutans*, *Dianella longifolia*, little *Lomandras*, native Plantains, *Viola betonicifolia*, *Bulbine bulbosa*, *Caesia calliantha*, *Eryngium ovium*, *Senecio bathurstianus*, *Mentha diemenica*, *Asperula conferta*..... These are the sights that keep us focused. The benefits of repeatedly traversing such a large area, allow us to mark and monitor the good things as well; constant reminders of why we are there.

And what makes this all possible is that coronavirus really closed off all other outside avenues for a while, so the time was there for us to devote ourselves to what the cemetery was throwing at us. We are basically a team of three, and since the 'emergency' broke there has also been one other FOG official working bee, to which most of the other Hall Cemetery regulars came. If anyone is interested in a look at the site or would like to discuss what we have been doing, just get in touch.

Vale Joan Goodrum

Geoff Robertson

Joan was born in Gujarat India and died on 23 June 2020. Her "order of service" described her, very appropriately, as an "artist, historian, environmentalist & bushy". She was also a long-time FOG member. I walked with her on a number of occasions around Tuggeranong Homestead. She had a vision of what the landscape was and what it could be. She was keen that the original perennial Tuggeranong Creek be restored and that ponding along it be restored. The creek had long since been diverted into the storm water channel.

Joan had a great understanding of how First Nations People lived on the land, and how the resources it offered were used by them. From beside the creek, First Nations People could describe the near and distant landscape. She also talked of how, bit by bit, their camping alongside the creek was excluded, an example of how white settlers pushed the local people off the land. Sadly, the Wikipedia entry for Tuggeranong Homestead begins with the white settlers and omits this cultural history.

Joan had a great understanding of Canberra's First Nations People and often talked of her many visits to her favourite sites in Namadgi National Park which were sites favoured by them and which contained much evidence of their association with those sites.

I was always amazed by Joan, a small woman who was dwarfed by her large 4WD, always with a smile on her face and a sparkle in her eye. She was a special friend.



Antlion, Myrmeleontidae (family) - a remarkable transformation

Michael Bedingfield

The metamorphosis from larva to adult by the antlion, as with many insects, is one of nature's fascinating achievements. The larva has a hunchbacked body, a flattened head and a pair of jaws that are huge for its size. It has small eyes, poor vision, is covered in bristles and could not be described as pretty. The adult however is elegant, with a long slender body, big eyes, clubbed antennae and two pairs of large, translucent wings.

The antlion is also called the antlion lacewing and belongs to the family Myrmeleontidae. The family is in the order Neuroptera which is for net-winged insects. Antlion refers to the insect's larval stage and lacewing to the adult stage.

The larvae are known for being fierce predators and many of the species create small pits as a trap in which they capture passing ants or other small arthropods. These are the ones we will consider here.

For these species of antlion the body of the larvae is designed for burrowing in soil. They make circular, conical pits in soft sandy soil that are 10 to 50 mm in diameter at the soil surface, the size depending on stage of the larva. They do this by walking backwards while pushing the soil or sand away from the centre of a circle. An antlion is extremely sensitive to ground vibrations so is aware of any possible visitor. Its body is covered in forward facing bristles that help give it traction from within the soil and it can capture insects much larger than itself. If a prospective prey happens to wander into the pit the steep slippery sides makes the animal lose its footing.

The antlion hides under the soil waiting for this moment. It may flick sprays of loose soil upward to enhance the effect of the slippery slope. When the intruder gets close enough to the bottom of the pit it is captured with the antlion's strong, venomous jaws. The victim is paralysed and then the meal is taken by ingesting its body fluids. These larvae are the best known of the antlions but there are many species which have other habits such as ambushing their prey in leaf litter or other debris. When mature enough they make a sand encrusted silk cocoon in the soil. After pupating they later emerge in the warmer months for the adult stage of life.

Less is known about the adults which don't look at all fierce and are comparatively graceful with their large lacy wings. The ones I've seen had a length of 30 to 40 mm including the head, body and wings. This is much larger than the larvae and their exoskeleton is very thin and light. Their flight is close to the ground with frequent stops and appears unsteady or laboured.

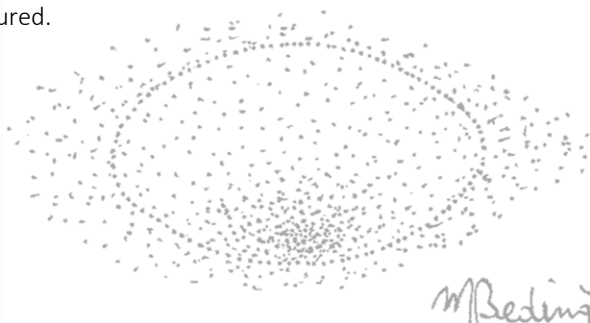
When I've observed them during the day they usually alighted on a twig or small branch to rest. They fold their wings over the body and twig and become quite inconspicuous. However they mostly fly at dusk or after dark and then they are really hard to see. After mating in the warmer months the females lay their eggs in the soil at a suitable site.

There are about 2000 species of antlion lacewings and they occur throughout the world in a variety of habitats including open woodlands and dry forests. The pit making larvae prefer places that are protected from the rain or otherwise dry and sandy. However I've seen their pits in places that are exposed to rain so some apparently have a way of dealing with it. Antlion lacewings are not the "kings of the jungle" however and there are insects that will feed on them. For example the female parasitic Chalcid wasp, *Lasiochalcidia igiliensis*, braves the jaws of the antlion and allows herself to be trapped in order to lay her eggs by ovipositing in the soft tissue between its head and thorax.

I have provided a drawing of the antlion to show the adult, larva and its cone-shaped pit. The nocturnal adults with their clubbed antennae and large lacy wings are easy to identify and are attracted to lights. So when you have accidentally left the porch light on one summer night you may observe one when it comes directly to your home!

References:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antlion>
<https://science.jrank.org/pages/446/Antlions.html>
<https://www2.palomar.edu/users/warmstrong/pljuly97.htm>



Upcoming Events

Tweaking events with Covid

Margaret Ning

As you can see from our latest events program, we have had to tweak our program for the rest of 2020.

Obviously Covid uncertainty plays a huge part in this, and our proposed Chiltern NP/Wangaratta grassland activity and Tassie Midland grasslands tour are immediate casualties. This is particularly frustrating as I have been waiting for the proverbial 'good season' for over a decade with Chiltern.

However, 'it is what it is', and what it also is, is the promise of a 'good flowering season' within our own region. So let's make the most of that! What I envisage, given the vagaries of covid rules (tightening and untightening), and also the moveable feast of where the best floral performances may be, is a flexible program of visits that is put together as we are notified of areas we should visit.

I invite FOG members to contact me with examples of 'spectacular areas/patches' that are crying out for a visit, and also other FOG members who would like to be part of our activities to contact me to go onto a circulation list to be contacted when we hear of great places to go to.

I envisage the season could start in September. We may only have short notice of some activities, so there may not be time to send out an Events update (our eBulletin), let alone a newsletter. I would circulate an email as opportunities present themselves, and you can contact me to let me know if you are interested in going. I envisage there will be weekend and week-day activities arranged in this way.

Open Day at Franklin Grassland

Franklin ACT

10am-noon - Sunday 6 September

This event is being organised by Environment ACT with assistance from FOG and other groups. We would like a big roll out to show support for the ACT's latest grassland reserve and FOG's major initiative there. There will be stalls, walks and the launch of the Franklin Grassland Master Plan on which you might like to comment. FOG will also need assistance with its display, examples of grassland plants, its stall, and people to assist with the walks.

Currently a survey to provide feedback on the draft plan and separate sessions are being organised to explain the plan and encourage people to respond to the survey.

For more info. & to show your interest, contact: maree.gilbert@fog.org.au.

Narrandera weekend

Friday to Monday - 25-28 September

Another interesting FOG excursion with Rainer Rehwinkel to visit high quality Travelling Stock reserves and other sites in and around Narrandera. It will be similar to the excursion that we undertook about this time last year. However, whatever we do will be subject to the Covid 19 restrictions operating in NSW at the time.

On the Friday, we will stop at a site (2-4pm) on the way to Narrandera. Participants are asked to book their

accommodation, and when you register, we can discuss possibilities with you. On the Saturday and Sunday we will visit several sites to the north and west of Narrandera and drop into some place for lunch. On the Monday, we will visit two sites and finish with lunch so that participants can be home at a reasonable time. For information and registration: margaret.ning@fog.org.au.

Bioblitz with Young Rangers

Sunday 18 October - 10am-12 noon

FOG will be guiding the ACT Young Rangers Club on a Bioblitz to increase awareness and understanding of the plants and animals endemic to our local grasslands. The location will be chosen closer to the event. If you would like to help, or join in please register with maree.gilbert@fog.org.au.

"Wandiyali" near Googong.

31 October - 9.30 am Sat (half or full day),

Wandiyali is a BCT property near Googong. Event will be led by Rainer & Margaret. Register: margaret.ning@fog.org.au.

Work parties

Stirling Park Group Work Parties

9am to 12.30pm, Sun 13 Sept, 11 Oct, 8 Nov & 13 Dec

The Stirling Park group is responsible for work on National Lands managed by the National Capital Authority and ACT TCCS land at Blue Gum Point. Upcoming work parties for September and beyond are:

- Blue Gum Point (NCA land): 11 Oct - planting.
- Blue Gum Point (TCCS (ACT) land): 8 Nov - woody weed control.
- Attunga Point (NCA land) 13 Dec - proposed lake shore planting & woody weed control.

Jamie also puts out a regular newsletter. For more information and to register for any events contact jamie.pittock@fog.org.au or 0407 265 131.

Events will be cancelled if the weather is unsuitable: a) the forecast is 35 deg C+, b) it is a total fire ban day, c) there is lightning, d) air quality is hazardous, or e) there is heavy rain. Tools are provided for work parties. Covid 19 guidelines will be provided.

Yarramundi Grassland

9am-11.30pm Sun 13 Sept

This is a joint event with the Stirling Park Group - tasks included will be scrape areas' maintenance and monitoring, wider areas continuing weed control. For more information and to register contact jamie.pittock@fog.org.au.

Franklin Grasslands:

1.15-3.15pm Thursdays, 3 & 17 Sept, & 1 & 15 Oct

FOG has now held eight work parties at Franklin Grassland up to the end of July, largely familiarising ourselves with the site, weed identification, distinguishing weeds from look alike indigenous plants, and manual weed removal. Ranger Craig Wainwright is working with us removing larger woody weeds and weeds of national significance (WONS). We took a break

in August. Under the leadership of Margaret Ning, this is an opportunity to learn plant identification and basic weeding skills. Eventually the group will become a parkcare group. For more information contact margaret.ning@fog.org.au.

Hall Cemetery work parties

9am-12.30pm, Sat 3 Oct & Sat 7 Nov

FOG has held regular working bees since 2009, initially to protect the endangered Tarengo Leek Orchid, and since to roll back the weeds in the understorey of the woodlands. 2020 has seen a proliferation of herbaceous weeds following drought and rain. In response, members of the FOG Hall team have put in many hours working in ones and twos to roll back the weeds. It has also received a Chief Minister's grant of \$1800 to employ professional sprayers. Join us in October and November to learn about our efforts and to assist. To find out more and to register for work parties contact john.fitzgerald@fog.org.au.

Scottsdale annual monitoring

8.30am-4pm Wed 11 Nov (to be confirmed)

FOG has undertaken annual monitoring surveys at the Bush Heritage property at Scottsdale, particularly monitoring efforts to control African Lovegrass. Monitoring days are pleasant, and an opportunity to learn about grasslands, grassland species and weed control measures. The 2020 bushfires burnt a large area of Scottsdale and hence this year we will be able to examine its impacts and the vegetation recovery. To learn more and to register contact linda.spinaze@fog.org.au.

Contact us

General & media inquiries: info@fog.org.au; phones 0403 221 117 / 02 6241 4065 (Geoff Robertson)

Membership inquiries & payments:

membership@fog.org.au or at www.fog.org.au

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

To join FOG work parties:

Hall Cemetery woodland, ACT:

john.fitzgerald@fog.org.au

ACT Yarramundi Grassland & Stirling Park woodland:

jamie.pittock@fog.org.au

Travelling stock reserves & Old Cooma Common, NSW:

margaret.ning@fog.org.au

'Scottsdale' (near Bredbo), NSW:

linda.spinaze@fog.org.au

Franklin Grassland ACT, NSW: margaret.ning@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

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