

This is Friends of Grasslands' (FOG) 2019 Annual Report. It explains FOG's values and strategies and their translation into an array of activities. Hopefully this report presents FOG in a simple and understandable way.

The report was prepared by Geoff Robertson on behalf of the FOG Committee and was endorsed by the FOG Annual General Meeting, 22 April 2020.

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Friends of Grasslands Annual Report 2019

Friends of Grasslands 22 April 2020



Supporting native grassy ecosystems

FOG is a community group dedicated to the conservation of natural temperate grassy ecosystems in south east Australia, including related flora and fauna species. FOG advocates, educates and advises on matters to do with the conservation of grassy ecosystems, and carries out surveys and other on-ground work. FOG is based in Canberra and its members include professional scientists, landowners, land managers and interested members of the public.

Native grassy ecosystems communities once dominated much of south east Australia and include treeless communities (grasslands), lightly wooded communities (woodlands) and more densely wooded communities (forests) where the ground story is dominated by native grasses and forbs (mostly wildflowers). These vegetation communities provide habitat for many threatened and rare animal species. They are also highly suitable for both agriculture and grazing. However, over time their original vegetation deteriorated or was replaced. Natural temperate grasslands once occupied eleven percent of south east Australia, now one percent remains, while woodlands, once extensive, are now less than five percent of their former area.

Within the Canberra region Natural Temperate Grassland of the South Eastern Highlands and White Box Yellow Box and Blakely's Red Gum Woodland are regarded as critically endangered under Commonwealth legislation, and as endangered under Australian Capital Territory legislation. These woodlands are regarded as endangered under NSW legislation and for practical purposes natural temperate grasslands are also. Elsewhere grassy ecosystems communities are also listed as highly threatened.

2019 highlights

Events

Friends of Grasslands (FOG) held 60 events, some organised in partnerships with other agencies and groups, and officially participated in 56 events arranged by other organisations.

Two major events included *Celebrating 25 Years* (1 Dec) and a forum '*FOG in the 2020s*' (16 Nov). FOG conducted field trips held in and around the Canberra region and further afield in New South Wales, and also visited Victoria. FOG also organised surveys, community awareness and education events, and held 16 work party events.

FOG involvement in events organised by others is an important way to contribute, to learn and to influence.

Communications

Six issues of FOG's flagship publication *News of Friends of Grasslands* were published with the aim of providing a readable, informative and enjoyable account of our delightful and complex grassy ecosystem communities, their function and their treasured flora and fauna, and community involvement in their care and restoration. Other communication tools include our eBulletin to advertise events, our website which contains a plethora of information and resources, Facebook, presentations at events organised by other groups, and the public media.

Advocacy

In 2019, FOG made 23 formal submissions and appeared before three public inquiries. Many submissions related to the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act. Four events were organised around advocacy: to review our annual work, to review and update FOG's position on conservation "offsets", and to organise submissions to EPBC Act review.

FOG Projects

FOG continued its work parties on national lands and at Hall Cemetery. It initiated twilight surveys at Stirling Park and successfully completed its Yarramundi Revegetation Project. Also FOG released its Draft

Concept Plan for Franklin Grassland, as a conservation and recreation reserve, which was well received, and the ACT Government announced its intention of making the reserve part of Canberra Nature Park.

Membership, governance & finance

FOG is a purely volunteer based, not for profit association, and its activities are organised by a large number of volunteers co-ordinated by the FOG committee. Their efforts were highly successful in 2019. At the end of 2019 FOG's membership was 222.

Excluding its Public Account, FOG received income of around \$20,000 largely comprising membership fees of \$6000, books sales of \$8000 (of *Grassland Flora* and *Woodland Flora*) and grants of \$6000, while its major expenditure was on projects of \$8800. Donations received in the Public Fund were almost \$5000 and FOG announced \$4650 in grassy ecosystem grants.

FOG's contribution to environmental outcomes

FOG maintains a record of events, their duration and number of attendees. It also conducted a survey of volunteers who estimated their time organising FOG activities. These data show that in 2019, FOG volunteer hours were 9900 and were valued at \$495,000.

FOG in transition

Despite many years of success, FOG faces a number of serious challenges, including the loss of experienced volunteers. The open forum '*FOG in the 2020s*' (26 Nov) canvassed transition scenarios. Since then a range of natural disasters has made FOG's future more problematic. Hence 2020 will be a make or break year.

Award to Ann Milligan

At its *Celebrating 25 Years*, FOG awarded Ann Milligan with a Certificate of Appreciation "for her leadership using her considerable communications and organisational skills in her roles as Newsletter Editor, Activities Officer and Acting President".

Cover photo: *Natural temperate grasslands at "Crookshanks" visited 6 Oct 2019.*

FOG events may open up new and pleasurable experiences to members. It may be seeing an amazing landscape through the eyes of another person who loves or cares for that landscape, or through the eyes of a first Australian. It may be experiencing an adventure with friends. It may be the sighting of unusual flowers and animals. It may be the sense of satisfaction on a work party restoring a grassland or woodland. It may be through adding to our knowledge through observing, surveys and citizen science.

FOG events

FOG held 60 events, some in partnership with other groups and agencies, and officially participated in 56 events arranged by other organisations. In total 594 people participated in FOG organised events and 116 FOG members contributed to other organisations' events. FOG's contribution involved 5910 volunteer hours valued at \$295,500.

General events

FOG's general events, those which all FOG members are encouraged to attend, included our Annual General Meeting (19 Mar 2019), our mid-winter event where we were treated to three outstanding presentations: Sue McIntyre *Putting climate-adjusted provenancing into practice*. Juliey Beckman *Assessing grassland use by small native marsupials*, and Bill Willis *Small-scale propagation techniques for some grassland species*; (31 Aug); a forum *FOG in the 2020s*, an open committee meeting/forum to discuss FOG's strategy in the years ahead (16 Nov), and *Celebration of FOG's 25 years* (1 Dec).

Type of event	Number of events	Attendees (no.)	Attendee hours
FOG events			
General events	4	113	464
Field trips	12	116	2529
Forum, surveys & education	11	81	723
Work parties	16	171	816
Governance	17	113	334
Total	60	594	4865
Events organised by others to which FOG contributed			
Large contribution by FOG	11	65	778
One to two FOG members	45	57	268
Total	56	122	1045
Total FOG contribution	116	716	5910
Value			\$295,500

Field trips

Field trips contribute to an understanding of grassy ecosystems, while providing enjoyable and friendship-building activity. They combine elements of learning and intelligence gathering, training and education, and are often better described as workshop-in-the-fields. Attendees may exchange information on management



Sharing an adventure with friends

and restoration, provide plant and fauna identification and so on. FOG visited a number of travelling stock reserves, grassy ecosystem reserves, members' sites (members' properties or sites they manage or care for) and sites that are, or potentially are, offset sites. At many sites, restoration work is taking place or planned.

Eight half and single day trips were organised to: Tuggeranong woodland, Theodore ACT (31 Jan), Gundaroo Common NSW (3 Mar), Eastern Broadacre ACT sites (16 Jun), a grassy woodland at Griffith ACT (21 Jul), a travelling stock reserve near Bungendore NSW (12 Aug), St Marks Barton and Blue Devil Grassland Umbagaong at Latham ACT (12 Oct), Frogmore, NSW (9 Nov), and Royalla NSW (10 Nov).

Four longer trips (involving a weekend or several days) were held: two to a Deua property NSW (13-15 Apr & 23-24 Nov), one to Morundah-Narrandera-Colleambally, NSW, combined with a night at the opera (10-12 May), and one to Narrandera and The Rock, NSW (21-23 Sep).

Forums, surveys & education

These events include forums, workshops, field surveys and training and education activities. As with other events, they aim to be enjoyable and to promote friendship and network building. Like other events, those who participate often learn skills that they may use in other FOG activities, professional work, personal lives or elsewhere.

These events include seven events associated with FOG's projects (see section on projects), three events associated with advocacy (see section on advocacy), and a Bioblitz (20 Oct) to introduce young rangers and their parents to the treasures of grasslands (organised with the assistance of ACT Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate and the Woodlands and Wetlands Trust).

Work parties events

Sixteen work parties were organised at National Lands and at Hall Cemetery (see section on Projects).

Governance events

Governance events include those associated with the administration of FOG activities (see Membership, governance & finance).

FOG contribution to events organised by others

Details of events organised by other groups and agencies are shown in the text box.

Indigenous engagement

Since FOG's first of five workshops with Ngarigo elder and traditional land management practitioner, Rodney Mason, in March 2011, FOG members have participated in Indigenous events where possible, to connect with and respect traditional culture and to learn and apply traditional knowledge.

FOG participation in events organised by others

11 Events - two or more FOG members contributed

FOG members accompanied Capital Authority Board (NCA) members at Stirling Park to discuss FOG ongoing involvement (25 Feb); two public promotion events - Cooma Show (9 Mar) and a ParkCare Display at Jamison Plaza (13-15 Sept); two events, celebratory in nature, at York Park organised by Friends of York Park to mark its demise (31 Mar and 2 Nov); two work parties - McLeods Reserve (organised by the Office of Environment and Heritage, 5 May) and a planting at Crookshanks, a FOG members' property (organised by Greening Australia, 5-6 Oct); FOG's second Malleefowl Dreaming at Rick Farley Reserve (organised by Mothers Ancestral Guardians Indigenous Corporation (MAGIC), 8-12 July); *Resilient future rangelands: integrating environment and livelihoods forum* - FOG contributed to organising and presentation at the field day (Sarah Sharp gave presentation) (2-5 Sep); Victorian Volcanic Plains Trip (19-21 Oct); and FOG organised table at the World Environment Day Dinner (2 Jun).

45 Events - one to two FOG members participated

The 45 other events included: 11 Conservation Council's Biodiversity Working Group meetings, 10 meetings associated with Franklin Grassland (see FOG Projects); 3 appearances before public inquiries (see Communications); 6 working group meetings - 3 Woodland Stakeholder Meetings, 1 Mugga Mugga Grassland Advisory Group, 1 Integrated Plan for Red Hill, 1 Conservation Council meeting to develop its biodiversity policy; 3 Indigenous land management events; 4 annual general meetings and celebratory events - K2C and Conservation Council AGMs, EDO celebration, and ACT Landcare Awards; leading two walks for the Conservation Council, a Heritage Walk at Kama Nature Reserve and a section of Walk the Border; attendance at *The National Biodiversity Offsets Conference*, EIANZ - ACT; and an interview on 2XX.



The Canberra Grassland Earless Dragon

In our work programs at Stirling Park, we have incorporated knowledge of Ngunnawal culture where possible, e.g. women and men only working in women's and men's areas, respectively. Stirling Park is referred to by its Ngunnawal name, Gurubang Dhaura, in our communications.

In 2019, four members of FOG attended Malleefowl Dreaming, Rick Farley Reserve (Mothers Ancestral Guardians Indigenous Corporation (MAGIC), (8-12 July), the Ngulla Firesticks Cultural Burning Forum, Ulladulla (4 Jun), a traditional burn at Jerrabomberra Wetlands (Oct) and the Aboriginal Search Forum, Sydney organised by MAGIC (4 Dec). In the the *Draft Franklin Grassland Reserve Concept Plan* (see Projects) released in July there were many recommendations regarding recognising and incorporating Indigenous values into the reserve.

Communication

Newsletter & eBulletin

News of Friends of Grasslands, since its inception, has been a high quality advocate for grassy ecosystems. It comes out six times a year and covers grassy ecosystems developments, past and upcoming events, grassy news, advocacy and much more. The newsletter is placed on the FOG website soon after its release.

Regular features include Michael Bedingfield's species profile accompanied by his drawings and photos, and John Fitz Gerald's close up series, with his photos taken through a microscope of the smaller features of plants which help explain their diagnostic features. John also contributes other feature articles regularly. Other regular contributors of articles are Rosemary Blemings, Roger Farrow, Naarilla Hirsch, Ann Milligan,

Margaret Ning, Geoff Robertson, Janet Russell, Sarah Sharp and Andrew Zelnik. One-off contributors in 2019 were Alice Bauer, Maree Gilbert, Libby McCutchan, Jenny Liney, John Morgan, Susannah Power, and Cathy Robertson.

Ten issues of the *FOG e-Bulletins*, which aim to keep members abreast of upcoming events in between newsletter issues, were issued.

Ann Milligan produced her last newsletter, the November-December 2019 issue in November, and at the same time stood down from being editor of the eBulletin. Ann had produced 35 issues of the newsletter and numerous eBulletins. Geoff Robertson has assumed editorship of both, hopefully temporarily.

Website

2019 was a smooth year for the FOG website. Most work involved keeping the calendar, newsletters and advocacy pages up to date. The statistics package on the server recorded 110,000 visitors for the year and 150GB in downloads.

What is a grassland? was the most popular page on the site (about 7% of visits), followed by *Grasses of NSW* and a *Grasses: habits and habitats* brochure. So the website continues to rank well for education. Advocacy and various newsletters each attract around 2% of visits (i.e. around 2,000 visits per year).

The fog.org.au domain is registered with OnlyDomains, the website is hosted by HostMetro in the USA, and FOG email services are provided faultlessly and free by Google.



Facebook

FOG established a Facebook page in November 2018 and is another media vehicle to distribute grassy news and information on upcoming events. Unfortunately, we have been somewhat remiss in keeping it up to date.

Email, phone and press inquiries

FOG has several email addresses through which it receives various inquiries, but most come through info@fog.org. It receives about 3-4 notices weekly of upcoming events, news reports and inquiries. Incoming information on events and news items is passed on appropriately, while inquiries are answered. Apart from advertising email addresses, FOG publicises phone number 0403 221 117 (Geoff Robertson's) which receives about one call a week.

Inquiries are made about all manner of issues such as what plants are suitable to plant, how does one manage vegetation, how does one volunteer, and many more. We are getting a number of press queries from journalists who want background briefings on our submissions (e.g. on the demise of York Park) and other newsy items on grasslands (e.g. the Taylor grassland clearing). One query led to an article on African love grass (ALG) in the Canberra Times with a photo of Geoff Robertson, as President of Grasslands, and commentary on ALG management.

Presentations to other organisations

Geoff Robertson gave two presentations on Franklin Grassland to ACT organisations: the ACT Government and Gungahlin Community Council, while Sarah Sharp gave a presentation at the field day component of the *Resilient future rangelands: integrating environment and livelihoods forum*.

Advocacy

FOG's advocacy group

Advocacy of grassy ecosystems permeates every aspect of FOG's work, e.g. through its events, communications and on-ground work. More directly, FOG makes submissions and undertakes various lobbying activities which are coordinated by FOG's advocacy group, coordinated by Naarilla Hirsch.

The group, and FOG more broadly, has over many years developed its understanding of how best to protect, manage and enhance remnant grassy ecosystem communities and their associated species. It has also kept abreast of decision-making processes, including legislation, that impacts (either positively or negatively) on grassy ecosystems. This includes legislation that protects biodiversity, including the Commonwealth's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act, and legislation focused on planning. Due to the complexity of grassy ecosystems and FOG's limited resources, FOG largely confines its advocacy to grassy ecosystems and habitat for related species.

An important part of FOG's strategy is its weekly web searches (twice weekly for EPBC listings) for matters likely to have an impact on grassy ecosystems. With sometimes only a short time available to respond, the FOG advocacy group researches the background, prepares a submission, gets agreement within FOG and submits the submission - a remarkable effort. More broadly, FOG monitors measures proposed or taken by government agencies and others that may have an impact on grassy ecosystem remnants. On some issues, FOG engages with its wider networks to support broader issues and/or to inform them of issues that FOG considers significant.

Submissions may take the form of comments on draft or amended legislation, policy and planning measures, as well as matters associated with management of government reserves and open areas where grassy ecosystem communities and related plant and fauna species may be impacted.

The group meets from time to time to review and plan its approach or to discuss particular issues. In 2019, the group met three times. The first meeting was on 25 Feb where it reviewed its 2018 work and planned for issues that may arise in 2019.

2019 submissions

In 2019, FOG made 23 submissions. These appear on the FOG website (<http://www.fog.org.au/advocacy.htm>) and covered a range of matters relating to large estate and small scale planning and other proposals that would have an impact on or destroy grassy ecosystem remnants and habitat for associated species in both the ACT and in NSW. They also covered threatened species listings (e.g. Key's Matchstick Grasshopper), ACT legislation, and management policy matters such as the woodland conservation strategy, tree protection act, the bush fire strategy and cat management plans.

An analysis of these submissions shows that that 15 submissions required substantial work, including three that required a very substantial effort; 9 were related to the EPBC Act, including one related to an audit of the Act; and 17 related specifically to ACT matters.

Networking

FOG continued its role of networking, formally and informally, with many agencies and environmental and community groups. It also participated in presentations and community consultation meetings concerning conservation matters. These engagements provide opportunities to learn and to influence decisions that may have an impact on grassy ecosystems and their management. Organisations that FOG has key links with are: Kosciuszko to Coast and its partner members; Conservation Council ACT Region and its Biodiversity Working Group; various Commonwealth, NSW and ACT government agencies; ACT Catchment Groups; the National Capital Authority; Bush on the Boundary groups and West Belconnen Reference Group; the Snowy Monaro Region Biosecurity (Weeds) Advisory Committee; ACT Grassy Woodlands Stakeholder

Group; Canberra International Airport and Murrumbidgee to Googong Reference Group (aka M2G Pipeline).

Public enquiries

FOG appeared before three public inquiries following on from several submissions, including Geoff Robertson's presentations (10 April) to the ACT Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Environment and Transport and City Services, on FOG's submission on *Nature in City Inquiry* (15 June 2018) and to the Yass Valley Council Planning Committee on the Parkwood Development (29 July) on its submission on that subject (15 May). Sarah Sharp appeared before the Senate *Inquiry into Australia's faunal extinction crisis* (23 Aug) on FOG's submission on that subject (9 Aug 2018).

Offsets

The Advocacy Group has had a focus on offsets which have become a major tool used by government to compensate for loss of threatened communities and species when these are destroyed due to some development. For example, the offset package for York Park is an offset site containing a large area of natural temperate grassland and habitat for Golden Sun Moth which is to be improved to increase the area of grassland and moth habitat. While in some cases, offset projects have produced good results, FOG opposes offsets in principle as there seems to be no evidence that offsets result in no net loss of biodiversity. Offsets have been used for some time in parallel with a steady loss of biodiversity. However, FOG recognises that in some circumstances developments will proceed and some loss of biodiversity is inevitable. In such cases FOG's submissions aim to reduce the loss on site and ensure that the offset package is well considered.

FOG has had an offset policy for some time and in 2019 decided to review and update it in the light of recent developments. It held two meetings (25 Jun and 28 Oct) to which other interested parties were invited. A revised policy has been developed and is available from advocacy@fog.org.au.

York Park

As FOG members would be aware, York Park was a remnant patch of critically endangered natural temperate grassland with a population of critical endangered Golden Sun Moth. It had long been hailed as an important high quality grassland remnant where the moth was first investigated. Further, it, along with St Mark's grassland, was the only remnant of Limestone Plains grassland in Canberra Barton area – these values were highlighted some years ago via a sign placed on the site. Despite its value, the site had been threatened by urban development including a hotel proposal for many years. FOG's opposition to the development included not only several submissions over the years, including 2019, but FOG also briefed the media and took action behind the scenes – all to no avail. An unrelated group Friends of York Park held two

events at the site, which FOG members attended (31 Mar and 2 Nov). The site was destroyed on 7 Jan 2020.

EPBC Act

The EPBC Act is under scrutiny at present. First there was an audit of the processes by which the Act is implemented to which FOG made a submission covering a number of issues we've encountered over the years. Then in October, it was announced that there would be an independent review of the EPBC Act. With the Canberra Office of the Environmental Defenders Office, FOG called a meeting of interested people and organisations (11 Dec) to discuss what we perceived to be the issues and how to encourage submissions. As well, FOG has prepared its own substantial submission.



A picnic at York Park before its demise.

Projects

National Capital Lands

The National Capital Authority (NCA) is responsible for a large estate of National Land in Canberra, including woodlands at Stirling Park (Gurubang Dhaura) and Attunga Point (Yarralumla) and Scrivener's Hut, and grasslands at Yarramundi Reach, Acton. In an ongoing arrangement with the NCA, FOG organises work parties doing fine scale and expert work under a management plan and adheres to strict occupational health safety procedures. NCA provides an annual small ongoing grant to cover equipment and herbicide purchase and training. This arrangement has worked well since 2009.

In 2019, FOG organised twelve work parties, including one at State Circle (17 Feb, 31 March, 14 April, 30 Apr, 5 May, 26 May, 29 June, 25 Aug, 7 Sept, 29 Sept, 27 Oct, and 24 Nov). In addition to formally organised

events, and common to other on-ground work, individuals often pop in to work on or monitor a site.

Jamie Pittock puts out a frequent bulletin to keep volunteers appraised of events and work parties at Stirling Park (Gurubang Dhaura) and Yarramundi Reach.

FOG holds regular Informal meetings with NCA and from time to time contributes advice on NCA strategies and plans. On 25 Feb the NCA organised a gathering at Stirling Park for members of FOG to meet NCA Board members to showcase the work that FOG was doing. A NCA sign has been erected at Stirling Park which explains FOG's involvement.

Yarramundi Revegetation Project

An initiative arising out of FOG's work on National Land is the Yarramundi Revegetation Project. In September 2018, FOG learnt that its application for an ACT Government Grant for the Yarramundi Grassland Demonstration Revegetation project had been successful. The project was a 'scrape and sow' involving removing several centimetres depth of (often nutrient-enriched) topsoil and seedbank and then sowing a native seed mix into the exposed soil layer. This technique eliminates or severely reduces weed regeneration. The small grant of \$3000, devised and brilliantly executed by John Fitz Gerald, paid for scraping the site and seed. The team that John assembled included talented FOG members who assisted in the design of the project and undertook the planting, weeding and monitoring. Four working parties were held (30 April, 26 May, 27 Sept, and 2 Dec). On the last occasion, which marked the completion of the project, 28 people, keen to see the results, attended. Interestingly, the group resisted watering the plots during the extended drought. Several articles have appeared in *News of Friends of Grasslands* on the project.

Twilight surveys

Another initiative associated with Stirling Park is the twilight surveys. Three surveys (16 Mar, 19 Oct and 16 Nov), arranged by Sarah Aylott and Jamie Pittock, were

Since its inception, FOG volunteers have undertaken on-ground work, adopting a holistic approach to planning, training, weeding, planting, monitoring and evaluating. Working bees require that work teams are properly trained and qualified and follow strict occupation health and safety procedures. While FOG follows the ethic of "doing what you preach", its commitment to on-ground work is much more than this. On-ground work provides a learning experience, and through its on-ground work, FOG has learnt and applied many valuable lessons and has become increasingly effective. Lessons learnt are also passed on through presentations at FOG and other events and through our submissions.

pleasant events and were rewarded by sightings of Sugar Gliders, Common Brushtail Possum, Grey Wolf Spiders, Flying Foxes and smaller bats. These are adding to our knowledge of Stirling Park and its fauna, and data captured were recorded on Canberra Nature Map.

Hall Cemetery

Also since 2009, FOG has organised working bees at Hall Cemetery in partnership with the ACT Public Cemeteries Authority which reports to the ACT Government through the Minister for Transport. In the past, work parties have removed vegetation that has threatened the endangered Tarengo leek orchid and, more recently, has weeded the woodland area. FOG organised four working bees in 2019, involving 39 people who contributed 200 hours.

Gungahlin Grassland Reserve

During the first half of the year, Geoff Robertson prepared a draft Concept Plan for Franklin Grassland to become a conservation and recreation reserve. A presentation of a preliminary plan was made to ACT government staff (6 June) and that led to a revision of the plan which was circulated and further comments received. The latest Draft Plan was released in July. On

John Fitz Gerald pointing out the results of Yarramundi Revegetation Project Grassland. Threatened species Perunga grasshopper seen nearby.



16 July FOG organised a workshop-in-the-field at which 32 stakeholders attended. There have been many visits to the site as various stakeholders have been shown the site. An ACT Government working party, in which FOG is involved, has been established to move the concept forward and a landscape planner has been appointed to prepare a landscape plan. On 13 Nov, Geoff made a presentation to Gungahlin Community Council which was well received. The ACT Government held an event (19 Nov) at the grassland and announced it planned that Franklin Grassland would become a grassland reserve within Canberra Nature Park, and called for submissions. FOG participated in the event which received good media coverage.



Franklin Grassland surviving through the drought.

Scottsdale Monitoring

FOG's annual monitoring at the Bush Heritage Scottsdale property took place on 13 November. These surveys have varied over the years and have been adapted to respond to changes taking place at Scottsdale in its management and weeding regimes. Apart from providing valuable data to Bush Heritage for its monitoring program, these days are very pleasant and a great opportunity to visit this exciting reserve and discuss its management experience.

Cooma reserves and Monaro Golden Daisy Monitoring

The 2019 annual report reported on FOG's longtime involvement on the Monaro, particularly at Old Cooma Common Grassland Reserve and more recently its project to manage weed invasion encroaching on that reserve, the Rifle range and a third reserve. It also reported on a Monaro Golden Daisy Survey conducted in that year. Unfortunately we were not able to follow up that work in 2019.

Membership, governance & finance

Membership

For many years, membership has remained constant around 200. At the end of 2019 it was 222.¹

FOG members are essentially individuals, comprising landowners and managers, professional scientists, land and park carers, conservationists and naturalists, who, as volunteers, support the protection and restoration of grassy ecosystems.

Governance

At our AGM 19 March 2019, the following people were elected: Geoff Robertson (President), Paul Archer (Secretary), Janet Russell (Treasurer), and, as Committee members, Juliey Beckman, Maree Gilbert, Ken Hodgkinson, Margaret Ning, Rainer Rehwinkel and Andrew Zelnik. Neither of the two vice president positions were filled.

The committee met six times in 2019, although the last meeting was combined with an open forum. Generally, meetings were kept to ninety minutes. Each required preparation of an agenda and reports, tabling of correspondence, recording of minutes and filing of papers.

In addition, there were separate formal sub-committees to organise events, advocacy, supported projects and awards. The committee worked effectively and between meetings, if necessary, the committee took decisions via email. Several informal committee groups met on an ad hoc basis to deal with certain aspects of on-going work or to develop new initiatives. In 2019, several major areas of FOG's organisational work were managed by non-committee members.

In 2019, apart from official office holders (president, secretary and treasurer), the following functions and organisers were Newsletter & e-Bulletin editor (Ann Milligan), Website (Richard Bomford), Facebook (Geoff Robertson and Laura Canackle), info@fog and spokesperson (Geoff Robertson), Events (Margaret Ning and Ann Milligan), Membership (Heather Sweet), Sales (Sarah Sharp), Advocacy Co-ordinator (Naarilla Hirsch), National Capital Authority Liaison and Work Party Coordinator (Jamie Pittock), Hall Cemetery Coordinator (John Fitz Gerald), Scottsdale monitoring (Linda Spinaze), Supported Projects Co-ordinator (Andrew Zelnik), Work Health and Safety (Geoff Robertson) and Public Officer (Andy Russell).

At the end of 2019, Ann Milligan stood down from her positions and was replaced as Newsletter & e-Bulletin editor (Geoff Robertson), General and Field Events (Margaret Ning) and Events Co-ordination Administration (Geoff Robertson).

¹ Including 8 corporates, 9 associations, 4 honorary life, 3 paid up life, and 10 complimentary.

Finance, excluding FOG's Public Fund

- FOG received \$19,922 and spent \$12,975, resulting in a cash surplus of \$7,847.
- Receipts included about \$6000 in membership fees, net sales of \$8000 (largely from sales of *Grassland Flora* and *Woodland Flora*) and a grant of \$6000 from the National Capital Authority.
- The major item of expenditure was \$8,000 spent on FOG projects funded by grants.
- Adjusting the cash balances for changes in the stock of books held and in grant liabilities, the non-cash surplus was \$6564.
- At the end of 2019, FOG's assets were \$76,321 and liabilities \$4,218, resulting in net equity of \$72,103.
- Assets comprised cash at bank of \$66,479 and book stocks of \$9842, while liabilities are for unspent grants.

FOG sales

Publications are another way to support grassy ecosystems. FOG's flagship publications, *Grassland Flora* and *Woodland Flora* (and other publications that FOG sells), aim to share a knowledge of grassy ecosystems and increase people's skills to identify plants. In 2019, sales were \$8602, contributing, after deducting handling charges and other costs of \$884, \$7718 to FOG's receipts. The purchase cost of the books sold was \$4751.

Supported projects

In 2019 FOG offered its third round of supported project grants, now referred to as Grassy Ecosystem Grants, which are grants of up to \$1500. Funding for the grant program comes from FOG's reserves and from donations to our Public Fund. To administer these grants, FOG has formed the Supported Projects Group which met three times in 2019.

In 2019, grants were advertised more widely than previously and FOG announced grants of \$4650, compared with \$4825 in 2017 and \$3000 in 2018. Successful grants were: replacing signs at South Gundagai Cemetery White Box Woodland (\$650); a plan to improve the grassland and woodland composition on Okehampton, Tasmania (\$1000); research into *Melichrus* (*Ericaceae*) in grassy ecosystems (\$1500); and the interaction of plant and soil microbes in weed invasion in grassy ecosystems (\$1500).

Public Fund

Since 2016, FOG has been a Registered Environmental Organisation which allows it to receive tax-deductible gifts through its Public Fund. The Public Fund provides a source for FOG's Grass Ecosystem Grants. In 2019, it received \$4,665.

FOG's contribution to environmental outcomes

A survey of FOG committee members, office holders and key volunteers reported that they contributed 3990 hours in 2019 (excluding time at and travel time to FOG events). A breakdown of these hours reveals that 35%

was spent on administration, finance and sales; 18% on researching and preparing submissions, 25% on communications (newsletter, eBulletin, answering queries and public media) and 21% on organising events (excluding attendance at events).

These hours, plus the volunteer hours attributed to FOG events and official volunteer hours at events arranged by other organisations brings the total FOG recorded volunteer hours of 9990. These volunteers hours, valued at \$50 an hour, is \$495,000.

Amending the constitution

Changes to the ACT Associations Incorporation Act 1991 were introduced as of 1 July 2019 (for a summary see https://www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au/app/answers/detail/a_id/1504/~/incorporated-associations). After making inquiries to Access Canberra, the committee decided to recommend not to change FOG's constitution until the ACT Government issues new model rules which FOG would then adopt. (FOG has always followed the model rules with some exceptions).

FOG in transition

Despite a very successful year, several key FOG volunteers have taken or will be taking a lesser role. At the open forum 'FOG in the 2020s' (26 Nov), the issue of transition was canvassed. Since then, there have been some natural disasters which will make FOG's future more problematic. Hence 2020 will be a make or break year.

Award to Ann Milligan

At its 25th year celebration (1 Dec), FOG awarded Ann Milligan with a Certificate of Appreciation "for her leadership using her considerable communications and organisational skills in her roles as Newsletter Editor, Activities Officer and Acting President". The citation stated "Friends of Grasslands (FOG) wishes to thank Ann for her significant contributions to Friends of Grasslands during the years 2014 to 2019. Her achievements include: publishing 35 issues of News of Friends of Grasslands, organising Friends of Grasslands' program of activities, producing the eBulletin, and being a committee member from March 2014 to March and 2017, and being a former vice president. Thanks for all your work Ann."

Sources and assistance

Important sources for this report are FOG's Audited Annual Accounts, FOG's membership list, FOG's Register of Events and FOG Volunteer Survey. The Audited Accounts and the Register of Events are available on request to info@fog.org.au.

To compile this report assistance has been received from: Andrew Zelnik, Ann Milligan, Heather Sweet, Jamie Pittock, Janet Russell, John Fitz Gerald, Linda Spinaze, Margaret Ning, Michael Bedingfield, Naarilla Hirsch, Paul Archer, Richard Bomford and Sarah Sharp.



*St Mark's grassland
from the ground up*



FOG's eastern broad acre tour



Looking for ancient stone tools at Rick Farley Reserve



Silky Blue-grass in flower