



Friends of Grasslands Inc.

Supporting native grassy ecosystems

Draft Annual Report 2021

Celebrate Threatened Native Grasslands



Hill Daisy



Australian Bindweed



Austral Sunray



Grassland Earless Dragon



Scaly Buttons



Billy Buttons



Mixed Wildflowers



Mixed Wildflowers



Native Flax



Monaro Golden Daisy



Grass Trigger plant



Blue Devil



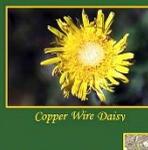
Smooth Rice Flower



Omeo Storksbill



Golden Moth



Copper Wire Daisy



Purple Violet



Common Everlasting Daisy



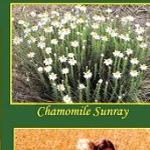
Rosetted Cranesbill



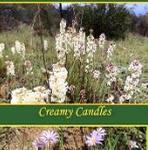
Grassland specimens



Swainson-pea



Chamomile Sunray



Creamy Candles



Common Woodruff



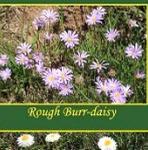
Bulbine Lily



Maive Burr-daisy



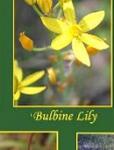
Kangaroo Grass



Rough Burr-daisy



Common Woodruff



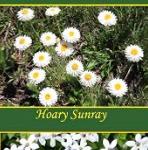
Bulbine Lily



Maive Burr-daisy



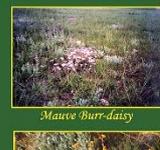
Austral Bugle



Hoary Sunray



Tall Bluebell



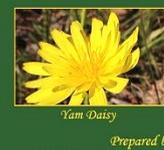
Maive Burr-daisy



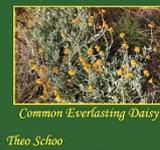
Scrambled Eggs



Swamp Isotome



Tam Daisy



Common Everlasting Daisy



Common Buttercup

Prepared by Theo Schoo
With Support from Upper Snowy Landcare Network
and Friends of Grasslands.

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Front cover image: A new FOG poster prepared by Theo Schoo with support from Upper Snowy Landcare Network and Friends of Grasslands. It is for distribution at FOG events and activities. The images on the poster are by June Wilkinson, Theo Schoo, Andrew Zelnik and Rainer Rehwinkel.

President's report

FOG has an ambitious mission for the conservation of grassy ecosystems, which are among the most endangered ecological communities in Australia. In 2021 we experienced La Niña weather conditions that led to native grasslands being at their most verdant – at the cost of major weed infestation. Restrictions to manage the COVID pandemic limited many of FOG's activities while also being a catalyst for FOG to reach out to more supporters on-line.

Despite COVID, FOG members continued an extraordinary range of activities to promote the conservation of grassy ecosystems during 2021, including our work on education, our field trips, on-ground projects, grants and advocacy, as well as producing an excellent newsletter and maintaining our frequently visited website. I thank the members of the Committee and the many other volunteers leading these activities, for their superb work. In this annual report the tallies of volunteer hours, the records of our healthy finances, the activity reports and the increase in membership in 2021, all attest to a vibrant year for FOG.

For 2021, Geoff Roberson stepped back after two stints as President. FOG is in Geoff's debt: he has been an excellent leader who has pursued a vision for conservation to better conserve grassy ecosystems and he has actively fostered the diverse array of activities that we undertake.

There has never been a more urgent time to defend grassy ecosystems as developers destroy sites bit by bit. Deplorably, in Canberra in 2021, final approval was granted to developers to destroy around a sixth of the Ainslie grasslands site (adjacent to the former CSIRO head office) and Aboriginal rock carvings, for yet another housing development. As another example, Defence Housing Australia has proposed a North Lawson residential development that would negatively impact a very important grassland remnant. FOG, with ANU students, conducted a key survey of a dozen off-reserve high conservation value grasslands in 2021, and we found that many had a degree of protection in the ACT Government's development offsets program. However, too many others lacked legal protection, were little managed and were threatened by such activities as off-road vehicle access. Too few resources for weed control and ecological burning were evident across land tenures.

Similarly, in NSW, too few protections for grassy ecosystem remnants are evident, with no major efforts underway to systematically conserve this biome. FOG's key step in 2020 – leasing one of the most significant grassland remnants, the Top Hut Travelling Stock Reserve near Adaminaby – has enabled noteworthy progress through 2021, with work parties and fence repairs by local FOG members and members from Canberra combined, to conserve this Grassland Earless Dragon habitat.

With long term concerns about the lack of government protection, in 2021 FOG and the Biodiversity Working Group began advocacy work for a conservation network (a form of protected area network) to conserve and link grassy ecosystem remnants across land tenures. This will be a focus in 2022 as FOG seeks systematic conservation of our threatened grassy ecosystems.

It is thanks to all the work members do every year, and have done since 1994, that FOG is highly respected for its achievements, approach and liaison, both with government and in the community. We really do make a difference!

Jamie Pittock

President, 2021

FOG Committee and FOG roles in 2021

President:	Jamie Pittock
Vice Presidents:	Margaret Ning, Andrew Zelnik
Secretary:	Sarah Sharp
Treasurer:	Janet Russell
Committee members:	Maree Gilbert, Alice Hathorn, Rainer Rehwinkel, Linda Spinaze, Heather Sweet
Advocacy team:	Naarilla Hirsch* (coordinator) John Fitz Gerald*, Alice Hathorn, Jamie Pittock, Rainer Rehwinkel, Geoff Robertson*, Sarah Sharp
Communication team:	Geoff Robertson* (coordinator) Eleanor Galvin*, Maree Gilbert, Sarah Hnatiuk*, Libby Keen*, Kath McGuirk*, Margaret Ning, Rainer Rehwinkel, Sue Ross*, Janet Russell
Website manager:	Richard Bomford*
Supported Projects team:	Andrew Zelnik (coordinator) Ken Hodgkinson*, Kim Pullen*, Janet Russell
Events & activities coordinators:	Margaret Ning, Geoff Robertson*, Andrew Zelnik
On-ground project coordinators:	John Fitz Gerald*, Margaret Ning, Jamie Pittock, Linda Spinaze
Membership team:	Heather Sweet (coordinator), Margaret Ning
Booksales	Sarah Sharp
Representing FOG in other organisations:	John FitzGerald*, Alice Hathorn, Naarilla Hirsch*, Margaret Ning, Jamie Pittock, Rainer Rehwinkel, Geoff Robertson*, Sarah Sharp, Andrew Zelnik
Public Officer:	Andy Russell*

*indicates non-committee member. Lists are in alphabetical order.

Friends of Grasslands Vision

In 2021 Friends of Grasslands adopted a new vision, together with clarified goals and rationale behind the vision. The vision aims to enunciate what FOG does and what its members stand for – as the place from which we advocate, and that frames and guides our work, statements and actions.

FOG's vision:

Healthy, biodiverse and connected remnant native grassy ecosystems continue to support life on Earth.

FOG will achieve this vision by:

- Acting to halt the decline of native grassy ecosystems and their biodiversity, and achieve the maximum level of recovery possible.
- Promoting and facilitating protection of the biodiversity of grassy ecosystems within and across the landscape.
- Recognising the need for community stewardship of these ecosystems, thereby continuing the cultural care provided by the Aboriginal peoples for millennia.
- Respecting the views and knowledge of all stakeholders and working with them to achieve our vision.
- Facilitating implementation of best practice management and encouraging development of methods to improve conservation through hands-on application, research, education, strategic planning and monitoring.
- Advocating for effective environmental laws, enforcement mechanisms, planning and management to underpin protection and conservation of native grassy ecosystems.

Rationale: see www.fog.org.au/vision202201.htm .

Advocacy

Naarilla Hirsch

In 2021 the Advocacy Group prepared 30 submissions, mostly to government, covering a range of conservation issues and proposals. Major submissions included comments about the Kosciuszko wild horse management plan and the Natural Resource Management Plan. Other topics we commented on included renewable energy proposals impacting on conservation value grassland sites, threatened species listing proposals, changes to some legislative frameworks and how they are administered, various management plans or strategies being updated, and a number of development proposals.

There have been several areas of Canberra involving significant time and effort from the Advocacy Group. The first is the proposed development of North Lawson, where we have been meeting with the Conservation Council and others to oppose this project – resulting in a joint submission late in the year, based on a huge amount of work. Another focus is the developments with a couple of roads in north Belconnen – William Hovell Drive and the Barton Highway; these have required a watching brief as well as a couple of submissions. The last area is the sites on National Lands, on which the team keeps a close eye, with some advocacy relating to these sites.

In the past year we have written several letters to ACT Ministers and others concerning a range of issues: Canberra airport northern road, William Hovell Drive duplication, regulation on National Lands, weeds, and microforests, although we are yet to receive responses to most of them. The group's submissions are summarised in each issue of *News of Friends of Grasslands*, and they appear in full on the FOG website.

A significant role of the Advocacy Group is networking with other environmental and community groups, some of which is outlined below. This has continued during the year on a range of issues, albeit via Zoom on many occasions. The North Lawson grasslands issue in particular has involved much networking with others.

As usual, the achievements of the Advocacy Group reflect the contributions of all the group's members. In the past year we have also had a lot of assistance from other FOG members. The main committee in general has been more involved in some advocacy issues, which has been very much appreciated.

Advocacy via work with other groups

Assessment of condition of grassland sites outside the reserve system by ANU Fenner School students, spring 2021

Sarah Sharp

Professor Phil Gibbons runs an undergraduate unit at ANU that requires students to undertake a real-world project. The objective is for them to undertake the project as a consultant to the proponents of the project.

Friends of Grasslands developed a project for the students to assess the condition of natural temperate grassland sites that occur outside the reserve system, and to consider what management issues occur. This project was designed to assist FOG and the Conservation Council in lobbying government to achieve better management and protection of native grassland (and woodland) sites outside the reserve system. We were also motivated by the opportunity for environmental students to be learning more about our threatened ecosystems and the complexity of conserving them within a modified landscape. Lockdown meant the students worked on this project in isolation, using online resources, being unable to physically visit the sites.

The students' key recommendations were: to incorporate remnants into neighbouring reserves where possible; to restore corridors of native vegetation; provide signposting and fence off areas; consult with and provide information to local residents; and investigate possibilities for modifying legislation to classify remnants as conservation areas, to form a protected area network.

The students achieved excellent results. We are grateful for their input and their generosity in making their reports available to FOG for further investigation of achieving better management and protection of our critically endangered remnants. Follow up liaison with government has resulted in weed control in several sites. In the longer term, FOG will follow up options.

For more detail see [News of Friends of Grasslands \(fog.org.au\)](https://fog.org.au): 2022-01 newsletter.

Biodiversity Working Group, Conservation Council of the ACT Region

Sarah Sharp

Three members of the FOG committee attend the monthly biodiversity working group (BWG) meetings. The issues dealt with by the BWG are primarily advocacy matters. For FOG, membership of the BWG is an opportunity to share information and knowledge, and that means FOG's advocacy submissions are better informed and stronger. Key matters in 2021 have been the proposed development of North Lawson, the Western Edge investigation area, protection of Bluett's Block and the protected area network, in all of which FOG has played a substantial role.

Biodiversity Conservation Forum

Sarah Sharp

FOG has one representative on the Biodiversity Conservation Forum, which was formed in late 2021. The purpose of the Forum is to create a dialogue between the ACT Government and community on current and emerging opportunities relating to biodiversity conservation, planning, policy and management; to empower the 'biodiversity' community to present and codesign actions to enhance biodiversity conservation in the ACT; and to focus on collective solutions. Two meetings were held remotely in 2021; meetings will continue to be held bimonthly.

Biodiversity Conservation Forum meetings are co-chaired by the Executive Group Manager, Environment, Heritage and Water Division of the ACT Government, and the Executive Director, Conservation Council ACT Region. Participation in the Forum is by joint invitation from the Conservation Council ACT Region and the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate. Apart from FOG, members include representatives of local environment and Landcare organisations, and relevant government representatives.

This Forum is proving to be an excellent means to establish collaboration between community and government representatives. A quote from the director of the Conservation Council:

“It's been helpful to get a heads up on what's coming from government as well as have a chance to clarify and understand their direction, and give early feedback on proposals.”

Bush on the Boundary West Belconnen

John Fitz Gerald

The suburb of Strathnairn in West Belconnen (at the ACT–NSW border) is now significantly developed, and the Conservation Corridor separating the homes and streets from the Murrumbidgee River is being managed and slowly opened for public access by the Ginninderry Conservation Trust. The Bush on the Boundary group (BoB) was able to meet on five occasions in 2021, with many issues from both areas being open for discussion and comment. Some meetings were conducted face-to-face, and others online. Representation from local residents will change some emphasis for this BoB, but it will retain its function as a forum for environmental and government groups across the ACT.

Kosciuszko to Coast (K2C)

Rainer Rehwinkel

The K2C Inc. committee last met in late 2021, when significant grant funds were made available from Great Eastern Ranges (GER) to a consortium on the NSW South Coast to undertake rehabilitation works in bushfire-affected parts of that region. The planning and consultation had been made by GER and the South Coast groups, with K2C Inc. expected to have managed the funds for that project. More information re the future of K2C was to have been forthcoming from GER, but nothing has eventuated. The FOG representative to K2C, who was erstwhile acting Chair, has stepped down from the committee, and the K2C Inc. committee on the tablelands is currently in sleeper mode. It is expected that K2C Inc. should be managed by the South Coast consortium going forward, though this has not yet been confirmed.

Communication

Geoff Robertson

News of Friends of Grasslands

The FOG newsletter, *News of Friends of Grasslands*, is our chief communication medium. Since 1994 its articles have told how FOG and other agencies, groups and individuals support grassy ecosystems through on-ground work, research and advocacy. The edition for November–December 2021 was the 153rd issue. All issues are available on the FOG website, <http://www.fog.org.au/Newsletters>.

Articles, drawings and photographs, in 2021 as in previous years, imparted well researched information relevant to grassy ecosystems and respectful of First Nations traditional land management practices. FOG's continuing advocacy was outlined, and submissions summarised. Several contributions in 2021 offered new ways of thinking about biodiversity and its protection and restoration, in relation to farming activities, and in relation to the ecological roles of major fires and droughts. As always, the editions of 2021 contained illustrated reports of FOG's on-ground work and its events and its visits for grassland interest.

Newsletter production in 2021 involved a greater workload than in previous years because of the large volume of material contributed. Fortunately, as begun in 2020, use of Dropbox meant the production workload could be shared across a bigger team. The extra volume led to two issues in 2021 having 22 pages, rather than being limited to 16 pages as in past years to meet postage requirements. A new initiative in 2021 was that some newsletter issues were sent out to non-member non-author stakeholders when they contained articles of relevance to those people. (Non-member authors have always received copies of the relevant issue.)

Most copies of FOG newsletters are distributed by email, but a smaller proportion are printed and mailed out. This distribution is traditionally handled by an informal group who fold, label, stamp and post the printed copies, six times a year. COVID in 2021 prevented the group meeting for some editions. For these, the printed copy distribution was shouldered by several hard-working persons, each working alone.

FOG thanks the newsletter contributors, and everyone involved in the production and distribution in 2021.

Events and Notices; Special Releases; Facebook

Following changes introduced in 2020, *Events and Notices* is now a regular update on upcoming events and other notices that we are aware of. The text is prepared from information provided by event organisers and other sources, and emailed out about once a month to everyone on the email mailing list, including non-members. In 2021 there were 12 issues.

In 2021 four *Special Releases* were distributed. Topics in these were: a membership register and changes in the *Incorporations Act* (February); North Lawson (April); feral horses (August); and a call for input into development of the new vision (October).

The FOG Facebook page displays grassy news and information on upcoming events. Three members of the communication team are responsible for placing material on this site, <https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Environmental-Conservation-Organization/Friends-of-Grasslands-FOG-2112576375659916/>.

Annual report

At its Annual General Meeting, FOG members receive reports which provide a comprehensive overview of FOG in the previous year. These reports since 2013 may be found on FOG's website (<http://www.fog.org.au/AGMs.htm>). In recent years, our annual report has been sent to all Canberra MLAs, Federal MPs and Senators, the member for Eden-Monaro and other stakeholders. In 2021, complimentary responses were received from Andrew Leigh MP, Mick Gentleman MLA, Nicole Lawder MLA, Peter Cain MLA, Leanne Castley MLA and Marisa Paterson MLA.

Email, phone and press inquiries: Info line

FOG has several email addresses through which it receives various inquiries, but most come through info@fog.org.au. It receives several notices weekly of upcoming events, news reports and inquiries. Incoming information on events and news items is passed on appropriately, while inquiries are answered. Some members whose names are well known are often contacted to answer inquiries.

Presentations and displays

FOG welcomes opportunities to work with other groups on matters and topics of mutual interest, including giving talks (see next item) and staffing public displays. These are all useful for spreading an understanding of grassy ecosystems and building networks.

In 2021, FOG members were among 30 people at the third Clean-up and barbecue at Franklin Grasslands organised by Suzanne Orr MLA (Saturday 13 March). Local residents and a host of ALP members also attended. This underscores a large commitment to Budjan Galindji (Franklin Grasslands) by the ACT Government.

Also, FOG participated in a public display on 27 March, in a joint stall with the Conservation Council at the Lawson markets, to gather support for our campaign at North Lawson. Ginninderra Catchment Group and Lawson ParkCare also participated in this event. Normally, FOG participates in an annual display at Jamison shopping centre, ACT, organised by local ParkCare groups in September; it was cancelled in 2021 because of COVID.

Workshops and forums via Zoom or in person

In 2021 FOG held a series of workshops and forums via Zoom. These included: *Wandiyali Restoration Trust*, with Carolyn Larcombe (January); *The future of grassy ecosystems*, with Professor John Morgan and Paul Gibson-Roy (February); *Forecasting the spread and impact of exotic plants*, with Dr Kyle Hemming (March); *Biodiversity Conservation Trust – Conserving our grassy ecosystems*, with Dr Donna Hazell (April); *Using offset funding to recover ecosystems and species habitat with special reference to Franklin Grasslands*, with Dr Ingrid Stirnemann (June); *How do volunteers begin to weed?*, with Margaret Ning and John Fitz Gerald (July); *Sustainable water management in south-east Australia and links to grasslands?*, with Professor Jamie Pittock

(September); and *Hints on identifying grasses*, with Geoff Robertson, jointly organised with the Bellarine Grassland Investigation Group (also September).

Two important events were cancelled because of COVID: *Reading a Grassland Landscape and Learning Aboriginal Cultural Science*, with Geoffrey Simpson (14 August) and a workshop and field visit to Charles Stuart University at Wagga Wagga (10–11 September).

FOG members made several presentations to other groups. In person, Geoff Robertson gave a presentation to NSW Upper Shoalhaven Landcare Council, Braidwood, titled *In awe of local native grasses* (February); and Rainer Rehwinkel and Geoff Robertson spoke at the Conservation Council 'Environment Exchange' session in February, about North Lawson.

During the year FOG closely co-operated (via Zoom) with the Bellarine Grassland Investigation Group in Victoria based on the Bellarine Peninsula, south-west of Melbourne between Geelong, Port Phillip Bay and Bass Strait. FOG attended a number of the Group's sessions, jointly organising a session with it (referred to earlier), and presenting two sessions. One, in May, was: *How has FOG remained vibrant for almost 30 years?* in which Geoff Robertson addressed a number of questions put to FOG before the presentation; and one in September, *How do volunteers begin to weed?* which was largely a repeat of FOG's online forum of the same title, with Geoff Robertson standing in for John Fitz Gerald.

Website

Richard Bomford

2021 was a smooth year for the FOG website. Most work involved keeping the calendar, newsletters and advocacy pages up to date. The statistics package was reset halfway through the year when the server computers were upgraded. For the second half of the year the statistics package recorded 63,000 visitors and 40 GB in downloads.

Apart from the home page, the information page *What is a grassland?* was the most popular page on the site (about 3% of visits), followed by *Grasses of NSW* (2.8%) and the resources page, *How can I get help for grasslands?* (1.5%). So the website continues to rank well for education. Advocacy and various newsletters each attract around 1% of visits (i.e. around 1,000 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.

FOG thanks all members of the various parts of the communication team for their hard work in their various roles.

On-ground work/projects

On-ground work is a strong focus of FOG. For each project: the site chosen has high biodiversity value; has, or may in future have, the potential to raise community awareness and attract volunteers; and a major partner is involved, allowing mutual influence and sharing of resources between the partner and FOG.

Apart from the sites noted below, FOG members also volunteer at a number of other grassland and grassy woodland sites around Canberra, not included here, providing advice and undertaking surveys, monitoring, weeding and planting and leading walks, as well as contributing to other Landcare and ParkCare programs. The community Vegwatch monitoring program is coordinated by a FOG member.

In 2021, on-ground work parties at FOG sites were advertised in *Events and Notices* and the newsletter, and in the FOG website [calendar](#). The project coordinators have provided the reports below.

Hall Cemetery

John Fitz Gerald

Hall Cemetery, on Wallaroo Road ACT, near Hall, is a 4.4 ha block of woodland enclosing the 1.2 ha cemetery. FOG teams work in the woodland, keeping it clear of woody weeds and removing other invasive plants as much as possible.

In 2021, FOG was fortunately able to run three of the four scheduled work events in the woodland; volunteers put in a total of 73 hours of effort. In addition, a few individuals visited on many other occasions, adding a magnificent extra 170 hours of weeding effort. Some of the woodland is looking excellent as a result, though other areas are very much 'work in progress' with a long list of weeds being controlled. Perennial exotic grasses are of particular concern because they add so much biomass that suppresses native plants. Much of FOG's work here is physical removal of seedheads and then whole plants, but spraying is also an important tool.

'Scottsdale' monitoring

Linda Spinaze

Since 2008, FOG has surveyed the vegetation each spring at several sites on the 1328 ha Bush Heritage property 'Scottsdale', near Bredbo NSW. The aim is to monitor the management of African Lovegrass (ALG) and its impact on remnant natural temperate grasslands. Although the monitoring timing, objectives and methods have changed over time, the data assist Bush Heritage to evaluate their management activities.

In November 2021 there were 10 in the monitoring team. We started the day with a welcome and information session from Phil ('Scottsdale' manager) and Brett ('Scottsdale' ecologist). They explained that the various methods of controlling ALG on 'Scottsdale' were finally showing some success, and that although ALG is still very much in evidence there are no longer huge thick paddocks of it.

Various methods of control have been used, including differing spray regimes, the most successful of which has been the low-concentration Flupropanate which is tolerated by the native forbs. Other methods have included 'scrape and sow', and Bush Heritage is now using more slashing to reduce the amount of spraying. The monitoring that we undertook this time was aimed at locating exactly where on the property the high/low vegetation value areas are, so that management decisions can be made with better information.

We examined 6 plots, each 50m x 20m. We had to find and identify all species of plants (weeds included), and after we had found as many species as we thought we could find, we worked out the abundance of each species. This is a bit tricky for inexperienced folk, but we had two experienced people in our team who helped our two groups. The plots were along the eastern portion of 'Scottsdale', and varied in vegetation, although they all had some species in common. After we had finished, we were able to drive through beautiful grassy woodlands with views of the mountains to the west, before heading back to the shearing shed.

Actual on-ground monitoring took about 5 hours (50 hours total for the group), not including lunch break and the drive around the property. Travel between Canberra and 'Scottsdale' took about 1 hour each way (20 hours total for the group, all of whom were from Canberra).

Thanks to everyone who contributed to the day. We hope that next year is similarly successful.

National Lands

Jamie Pittock

Since 2009 FOG has partnered with the National Capital Authority (NCA) to restore national significant grasslands and woodlands managed by NCA on National Lands in Canberra. Gurubung Dhaura (Stirling) Park, south of Lake Burley Griffin, is 52 ha of box-gum grassy woodland. Among other threatened species there is one of the biggest remaining populations of Button Wrinklewort (*Rutidosis leptorhynchoides*). Yarramundi Grassland, some 10–50 ha north of the lake near Yarramundi Reach, is an area of natural temperate grassland.

Restoration activities in 2021 at Gurubung Dhaura and Yarramundi Reach were again disrupted by COVID restrictions. Despite this a remarkable amount of work was undertaken during eight work parties involving

120 volunteers (many of whom are 'regulars', at each session) who overall put in 357 volunteer hours, and dispatched an estimated 47 m³ of woody weeds. Additional volunteer work at other times totalled 252 hours. Special thanks to Graeme Hirth who contributed 124 hours of work to keep burgeoning weeds under control at Gurubung Dhaura and nearby Blue Gum Point (see below).

FOG appreciates the National Capital Authority (NCA) providing \$6,000 and practical collaboration to support restoration of the National Lands sites.

In 2022 FOG will be renewing our calls for the National Land sites to receive stronger legal protection and for an increase in resources for weed control and fire management.

- Gurubung Dhaura (Stirling) Park
Jamie Pittock

A highlight at Gurubung Dhaura in 2021 was our work with the NCA and Greening Australia to replant to grassy woodland on a former pine plantation on the western edge of the park. A smaller area previously occupied by Blue Gums was also revegetated and a kilometre-long redundant fence was removed. As with all sites, La Niña weather conditions meant that we battled in late 2021 to keep weeds under control. In addition to regular weeds, especially St John's Wort and African Lovegrass, new infestations of Purple Top and Spurge required particular attention. Unfortunately, rains prevented ecological burns on all National Lands.

- Yarramundi Grassland
John Fitz Gerald

2021 at Yarramundi Grassland was pretty much a mark-time year. There has been much plant growth, but some of it – such as St John's Wort – is most unwelcome. The rotational burn program did not proceed, nor did the contained mowing in some of the *Themeda*-rich areas. FOG did manage one work event in April when *Themeda* tube stock were planted. Our two small 'scrape and sow' patches are steadily maturing and are now, effectively, fully revegetated with significant cover of native grasses and forbs. Volunteers and contractors have carried out some weed control across highest priority areas through the grasslands. Two plots are being monitored by FOG as part of the community Vegwatch monitoring program.

- Lindsay Pryor Arboretum, Yarramundi
John Fitz Gerald

There are no meetings to report, but FOG held discussions with the NCA about the area, its weeds, and plans for a small public structure to be built alongside the Oak plantation for shelter and amenity. This arboretum is near Yarramundi Grassland. In June 2021, the National Rock Garden announced its move to the National Arboretum, right alongside the Southern Tablelands Ecosystem Park there (Forest 20).

Blue Gum Point

Jamie Pittock

In 2021, drawing on a FY21 ACT Environment Grant of \$20,856, FOG continued our collaboration with ACT City Services (TCCS) to restore a further ~8 ha of significant box-gum grassy woodland at Blue Gum Point east, despite COVID disruptions. This site adjoins Gurubung Dhaura. It is on urban parkland by Lake Burley Griffin in Yarralumla. The site contains populations of the nationally endangered Button Wrinklewort (*Rutidosis leptorhynchoides*) (which we recorded onto Canberra Nature Map) and Golden Sun Moth (*Synemon plana*). In August 2021, FOG received a further grant to continue the removal of woody weeds along the shoreline and replace them with suitable indigenous vegetation.

FOG has been undertaking weed control across the site, particularly of African Lovegrass, Chilean Needlegrass, Blackberry and St John's Wort. We oversaw removal of around a half of the woody weeds by area on the site, especially along the lake shore. We planted River Oak (*Casuarina cunninghamii*) and indigenous shrubs and ground cover species on the disturbed lake shore and conserved a rare population of Buloke (*Allocasuarina luehmannii*) through supplementary planting. Liaison with ACT City Services to restrict mowing and block fishers driving to the lake edge resulted in natural regeneration of 250 eucalyptus trees. In-kind work organised by FOG was valued at \$13,321.

Budjan Galindji (Franklin) Grasslands Nature Reserve

Margaret Ning

The 20 ha Budjan Galindji (Franklin) Grasslands Nature Reserve in Gungahlin, previously known as Mitchell and then Franklin Grasslands, although previously poorly managed for conservation outcomes retains about 4 ha of high quality natural grasslands, a remnant woodland and important water features (ephemeral wetland, an old farm dam and drainage lines). The site overall has, or is visited by, five threatened fauna species, one threatened plant species (Ginninderra Peppergrass, *Lepidium ginninderrense*), and several fauna and plant species that are rare, among its other diverse grasses and forbs.

Throughout 2021 we managed to hold 15 working bees – with up to ten volunteers at any one time, but normally four to six – who in total put in approximately 200 person hours of work. However, visible progress has been limited to one small plot where we have planted some Wallaby Grass and weeded after the blackberry was removed by the ranger. The site was subject to Wild Oats inundation in the 2021 spring, amongst other amazing weed growth this year; hence we have set up a ‘Wild Oats monitoring plot’ where we plan to keep out all Wild Oats and monitor how effective that is. Potentially boggy conditions during 2021 restricted government mowers from operating as much as we would have liked, and we are no longer permitted to use either battery-operated or fuel-operated equipment, such as brush cutters, which would be very effective there. An impressive seed production garden has been established at the northern end of the reserve and is looking very colourful.

Thank you to all the Franklin volunteers.

Top Hut Travelling Stock Reserve (TSR)

Margaret Ning

Top Hut, between Cooma and Adaminaby, is one of six high conservation grassland and woodland TSRs being managed for conservation across the Monaro by environment and private organisations. It supports an amazing diversity of grassland plants and a population of the endangered Monaro Grassland Earless Dragon (*Tympanocryptis osbornei*). FOG signed a lease in July 2020 with South East Local Land Services (LLS) for five years of management – originally envisaged as weed removal at a series of regular working bees.

In 2021, FOG held working bees in January, April, October and December to progress the weeding program, putting in 204 person hours in total on the weeding program and in fencing repairs (the October visit) using materials that LLS provided.

Following two good seasons, the NSW Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) is considering some biomass reduction to enhance the Monaro Grassland Earless Dragon habitat. Debate continues over whether the solution is a mosaic burn or grazing. After recent discussion about placing beehives on the TSR, LLS decided not to; FOG pointed out that in a site being managed for biodiversity, an influx of non-native bees could detrimentally affect native pollinators and possibly change the plant composition over time.

A huge thank you to all our volunteers, and also to donors to the FOG public fund who nominate Top Hut to receive their donation. So far our largest expenses have been two years of lease payments.

Ginninderry Conservation Trust ‘scrape’ monitoring

John Fitz Gerald

In 2020, the Ginninderry Conservation Trust (GCT) sought FOG’s assistance to monitor its 0.27 ha ‘scrape and sow’, created in April 2020 at Strathnairn and sown to some 24 native grass and forb species in May 2020. Forb species included Bulbine Lily (*Bulbine bulbosa*), Native Flax (*Linum marginale*), Bluebells (*Wahlenbergia* sp.), Hoary Sunray (*Leucochrysum albicans*), Common Everlasting (*Chrysocephalum apiculatum*), Bindweed (*Convolvulus angustissimus*), and more.

The vegetation was surveyed again this year in October by 6 FOG volunteers and 3 staff from the GCT on 18 October. Vegetation cover is slowly building in the scrape, but unfortunately some of that is from exotics. A control plot 400 square metres in size was added to the monitoring task for the first time, in the paddock outside the scrape.

The Ginninderry Conservation Trust is warmly thanked for its generous donation to FOG to acknowledge the cooperation.

Old Cooma Common Grassland Reserve (OCCGR)

Margaret Ning

Old Cooma Common was the site of FOG's first major on-ground project, in the year 2000, in response to a large 12 month Threatened Species Grant (from the World Wide Fund for Nature, WWF) to create a grassland reserve at Radio Hill at Cooma. The site is now a Crown reserve with extensive natural temperate grasslands with many patches of vulnerable and little known Monaro Golden Daisy. Cooma Monaro Council (now part of Monaro Snowy Mountains Council Council) was and is the land manager.

While FOG has not held any work parties at OCCGR for some years, it continues to take an interest in the site, and members often pop in while passing.

In recent years there have been negotiations between Council and the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust to provide funding in perpetuity to Snowy Monaro Regional Council to manage the reserve. However, to date no funding has arrived.

FOG recently paid for a reprint of 500 OCCGR brochures, as the earlier supply had run out, and the Cooma Visitor Centre was asking for more!

FOG events

Geoff Robertson

Visits to sites of grassland interest

Every year, FOG leads visits to grasslands which help members and others appreciate and learn about the range and fascination of natural temperate grassland flowers and grasses. In 2021, as usual, we visited sites in NSW as well as across Canberra.

On 7 March, 40 people visited 'Severn Park' in southern NSW, owned by Charlie Massy, and on 12 June, 17 people visited FOG on-ground sites in Canberra. Reports on these were in *News of Friends of Grasslands* May–June and Sept–Oct 2021. A planned spring revisit to FOG's on-ground sites to observe them in flower was cancelled because of rain.

FOG groups visited 10 other sites of grassland interest in 2021, including two 'hot spots' – which were sites with outstanding native wildflower displays because of recent wet years. These ten visits, attracting between 5 and 27 people each, looked at: Indigenous grasses at a house in Ngunnawal ACT (on 15 January); Flea Bog Flat, Bruce ACT (11 April); Yass Gorge NSW (15 May); 6 Mile Reserve near Bungendore NSW (10 July); Gossan Hill, Bruce ACT, a 'hot spot' (16 October); Dryandra St, O'Connor ACT (30 October); Mount Fairy NSW, a 'hot spot' (1 November); 'Ballyhooly' NSW (27 November); Monash Grassland ACT (8 December); and 'Dacelo' NSW (rescheduled because of rain, to 11 December). A visit to grassland in Murrumbateman NSW was twice scheduled and cancelled (7 & 14 November) because of the weather. Also, two reconnaissance trips checked sites for future visits (Picaree Hill & Creewah, both in NSW).

Besides wet weather, COVID also led to rescheduling and some cancellations. In-person visits to grassland groups in both Victoria and Tasmania (originally planned for 2020) were not possible.

Other general FOG events

In mid-March 2021 we held our AGM in the Conservation Council rooms in Acton/Civic. As on most previous occasions, before the meeting there was plenty of good food and chatter. The committee was re-elected with the addition of Alice Hathorn, though Geoff Robertson (FOG president in 2019 and 2020) and committee members Ken Hodgkinson and Juliey Beckman resigned. Jamie Pittock was elected president. Margaret Ning

and Andrew Zelnik were elected joint vice-presidents. A complete list of the committee is on page 2 of this report.

Our Christmas celebration in mid-December 2021 was very successful with 29 people attending. This year it was held at Blue Gum Point, which is one of our on-ground project sites near Lake Burley Griffin, grateful that we had a canopy over the food during a sharp rain-shower.

FOG attending others' events

FOG members attended a Zoom session by the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust, called *EOIs to earn payments for managing Monaro grasslands and woodland*, on 2 September. A number of FOG members attended sessions that the Bellarine group in Victoria conducted (via Zoom), about regenerative farming. FOG members also attended other events during 2021, on FOG's behalf.

FOG Supported Projects (FSP) Sub-Committee Report

Andrew Zelnik

In 2021 the FSP Sub-Committee ran its fifth annual round of Grassy Ecosystem Grants. The grants of \$500 to \$1,500 each are to promote FOG's objectives and priorities in relation to the understanding, conservation and management of native grassy ecosystems in various ways including communication, education, advocacy, research and on-ground work. The grants and the concept behind them have been well described in FOG newsletters since 2017, e.g. at this link (<http://www.fog.org.au/Newsletters/2019-05newsletter.htm>). Any individual or organisation can apply for a grant. Details of all grants funded to date can be accessed via the grants information webpage, <https://www.fog.org.au/supportedprojectslist.htm>.

Funding for the grants program comes primarily from donations to our Public Fund, supplemented where necessary from FOG's other funds, such as the Publications Account. The FSP Sub-committee manages: administration of the grants; the call for, information about, and processing of applications; pre- and post-project implementation inspections; review and editing of submitted grantee newsletter articles. It recommends applications to receive grants, and provides regular progress updates to Committee and, via the FOG newsletter, to members, donors, and any interested members of the public. The FSP Sub-committee met three times in 2021.

During 2021, seven grant applications were received. Three were for public education and outreach initiatives at three notable sites in the ACT. Three, from university PhD candidates in Sydney and Wollongong, were for experimental research projects on various aspects of native grassland soil microbe function relating to grassland restoration and to climate change. The other, our first from South Australia, was for on-ground works (weed control and revegetation) on a significant remnant of grassy woodland on a town common. In addition, we also received four other associated enquiries, including two from private landholders (not FOG members) looking to enhance the condition of native grassy vegetation on their properties.

FOG Committee approved grants for all seven applications totalling \$9,792 (six projects at \$1500 and one at \$792), as compared to the \$5,700 awarded in 2020, and well above our typical annual budget maximum of \$5,000. This decision, while not the norm, was made based upon the assessed merit worthiness of all projects (reflected in the relatively small range of their total assessment scores), and due consideration of FOG's current financial position. An article describing the grant applications in more detail was published in *News of Friends of Grasslands*, January–February 2022, pp. 8–9.

The COVID-19 pandemic situation in the ACT and NSW and other issues and delays impacted grant offer acceptances and implementation timelines for the 2021 projects, and also compounded previous delays with uncompleted previous year grant projects. Regrettably this situation has since resulted in one 2021 project, St Marks Grassland Visitor Education Viewing Garden (ACT), declining to take up our \$1500 grant offer. One 2019 grant and three 2020 grants remain to be acquitted, but FOG has no further funding liability for these. In 2021 FOG paid out \$6,792 to grantees (one 2020 and four 2021), all coming from the Public Fund.

Membership

Heather Sweet

At the end of 2021 FOG had 233 members, compared to 221 members at the end of 2020. Most FOG members are individuals or families – landowners and managers, professional scientists, land and park carers, conservationists and naturalists. There were also 6 corporate entities and 13 not for profit organisations with FOG membership.

Administration

Book sales

Sarah Sharp

In 2021, 507 *Grassland Flora* and *Woodland Flora* books were sold. The Botanical Gardens Bookshop remains the largest buyer, but books are also sold by other regional booksellers and directly, within the region and even overseas. Only a small margin of profit is gained from the books sales, and that profit is used for print runs of additional copies if required and, at times, to fund FOG's supported projects where these result in an educational outcome.

Treasurer's report

Janet Russell

The audited accounts for 2021 will be presented to FOG members at the Annual General Meeting on 17 March 2022.

Estimates of times spent on behalf of FOG in 2021

Ann Milligan[†]

Hours in some on-ground work and travel

Hours FOG members and others gave in 2021, voluntarily doing actual on-ground work on FOG projects, are noted in the on-ground reports above, and summarised here. They are based on times recorded on site in 'sign-on' sheets at each work session.

Times volunteers spend in *travelling to and from* work sites vary widely, depending on where they live in relation to the site. Total travel times add many more hours to the amount of time put in by volunteers for the year. Three examples are noted below (from records and estimates). Volunteers live in Canberra and surrounding NSW.

On-ground work in 2021 at six FOG work sites

- Hall Cemetery: 73+170 = 243 person hours
 - 'Scottsdale': 50 person hours
 - Gurubung Dhaura
and Blue Gum Point: 357 + 252 hours = 609 person hours
 - Budjan Galindji: 200 person hours
 - Top Hut TSR: 204 person hours
- total* 1306 person hours just on these 6 work sites in 2021

Some travel times in 2021: example only

- 'Scottsdale': 20 person travel hours, for 1 work party*
 - Top Hut TSR: 83 person travel hours, for 4 work parties†
 - Budjan Galindji: 77 person travel hours, for 15 work parties
- total* 180 person hours for travel just for these 3 work sites in 2021

* from and to the rendezvous in southern Canberra, not including travel between homes and the rendezvous;

† from and to homes in Canberra area and Cooma area.

Hours in general administrative activities

General administrative activities by the volunteers who manage FOG activities – the office bearers, the coordinators and their teams – also takes a lot of time. ‘General administrative activities’ here includes correspondence, emails, phone calls, reporting, management of files and documents, and general coordination, as well as being at actual meetings or running activities or programs. Members of these various FOG teams kept records or made estimates of time they spent during 2021, and those (probably underestimates), are totalled below.

- *Advocacy, including research, preparation of submissions, and outreach via work with other groups, took at least 600 hours.*
- *Of that total, the Fenner project took at least 69 hours of FOG volunteers’ time (that does not include the students’ time).*
- *Communication (all aspects) including presentations and interactions with other groups on behalf of FOG took at least 1087 hours. (That does not include visits to grasslands of interest.)*
- *At least 302 hours were spent by the team managing the Supported Projects grants.*
- *Membership matters took about 53 hours.*
- *Book sales took about 44 hours.*
- *Administration, including correspondence, managing finances, managing IT matters, organising the various FOG visits, work and events, preparing for and attending meetings and dealing with matters arising, etc., took more than 1030 hours.*
- *Overall, therefore, the volunteers involved in advocacy, communication and administration put in more than 3100 hours in support of FOG during 2021.*

Overall estimate (from above): over 4500 hours

- On-ground work and travel (from previous page): over 1400 hours
- Administrative activities: over 3100 hours

*NOTE: Geoff Robertson managed and collated the keeping of all the time records from January to June, and from July onwards for some work sites and visits.

Thank you to all the members of FOG who volunteer in all your ways,
to support FOG’s vision and FOG’s work!
You are much appreciated.

Thanks to Andrew Zelnik for the two images on the back cover, overleaf.

Top. Volunteers at a FOG working bee on Wednesday 7 April 2021 at Budjan Galindji (Franklin Grasslands) Nature Reserve, Franklin ACT, planting grass seedlings grown by FOG member Vanessa Goss.

Below. People attending the visit to FOG's Canberra on-ground projects on Saturday 12 June 2021. This photo is taken on NCA land, at Gurubung Dhaura (Stirling) Park, Yarralumla.

Friends of Grasslands Inc. Draft Annual Report 2021



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