

News of Friends of Grasslands

supporting native grassy ecosystems

September - October 1999



FOG'S COMING EVENTS

SPRING 1999

Tuesday 7 September, 10am-noon – Threatened Species Day Celebration, Radio Hill, Cooma Help us raise community awareness and involvement in FOG's Radio Hill Project, financed under the Threatened Species Network grant. The project aims to conserve an endangered ecosystem (a natural temperate grassland), a vulnerable species (Monaro Golden Daisy) and a threatened species (Hoary Sunray). We hope local media, officials, community members and school children will join us on a FOG "walk and talk in the grassland" and a James Dawson-led rock rolling for the Striped Legless Lizard and Grassland Earless Dragon.

Join us on Radio Hill – call Margaret for carpooling or directions.

Tuesday 7 September, 7pm – Geoff Butler on weeds (Environment Centre, Kingsley St, Acton) Geoff is the Conservation Council's weed officer. Last year wasn't only a good year for our native plants. Unfortunately we also saw the weed population explode as Cape Weed, Paterson's Curse and St John's Wort seemed to totally take over some landscapes. There have been many inquiries and much discussion as to whether there would be an effective government response to this growth. Geoff will spend an evening with us explaining the ACT government's policy on weeds; its history, the present and the future.

Coffee/tea provided.

Sunday 10 October, 9.30am – South Murrumbidgee visit and BBQ Michael Treanor, co-ordinator of Parkcarers of South Murrumbidgee (POSM), has invited FOG to come along to a walk and talk about the section of the Murrumbidgee that his group and the ACT Parks and Conservation Service, look after. The group, and a number of rangers, will show us the main interesting and important features that make this part of the 'Bidgee' special. It's an area from Pine Island to Point Hut, which includes a number of endangered species and areas of remnant grassland. We'll focus on identification and management aspects.

Meet at Point Hut Crossing just out along

the Point Hut Rd near Gordon. We'll finish around noon with a BBQ at Pine Island – BYO BBQ goodies. For further enquires contact Michael on 6291 8220 or Margaret Ning.

Saturday 30 October – Northern Cemeteries tour We plan to repeat last year's successful northern cemeteries tour and visit more of Rainer's special places. See page 3 for the itinerary and meeting times.

Saturday 13 November – Mulligan's Flat for FOG's fifth birthday We'll compare Mulligan's Flat in November with what we saw there in winter 1998! Join us for a celebratory glass of champagne. (FOG was launched on 12 November, 1994.) Please RSVP to Margaret to help with planning.

Important notes on coming events:

- Please put firm dates in your calendar.
- For outdoor activities, don't forget your hat, sunblock and drinking water.
- For insurance purposes, sign in/out at activities.
- For any information about activities (including times, venues and carpooling details), please contact Margaret Ning on 6241 4065 (home) or 6252 7374 (work).
- To make program suggestions, contact Margaret.

Saturday 27 November – Majura Field Firing Range A rare morning opportunity to visit another local grassland gem.

4-5 December - Southern Tablelands Grassland Hotspots We'll do something similar to last year's southern cemeteries tour.

January 2000 – Common grasses identification workshop

Saturday and Sunday 5-6 February 2000 – Alpine grassland weekend and Y2K bug identification We'll travel down to Perisher on the Friday evening and have a full day amongst the flora on the Saturday. On the Sunday morning Kim Pullen will lead us on a discovery of some of the invertebrates in the area. (\$40 total for Friday and Saturday nights in the lodge - BYO sleeping bag, food, etc.)

(There are still a couple of vacancies for this weekend, so contact me if you are interested. Could people who have only paid a deposit

please forward the balance owing to me as soon as possible. Margaret)

ALSO OF INTEREST

Saturday 4 September, 9am to 3pm – Rock rolling with James Dawson (NSW NPWS) near Kuma Reserve, Cooma Looking for the Striped Legless Lizard, the Grassland Earless Dragon and other lizard species - should be very educational. Enquiries to James on 6298 9728.

Sunday 12 September, 1.30pm – Fisher Parkland discovery and rehabilitation Come see the beauties of a small grassland remnant between Mt Taylor and Cooleman Ridge. We'll see what gems the spring season brings us and attack some of the more unwanted growth. We'll also identify as many plants as possible and see how many we have on our species list by the end of the day.

Meet at the Weston Ck sign on Namatjira Dr, please BYO weeding tools, hat and drink bottle. Afternoon tea will be provided.

Sunday 21 November - St Mark's Grassland Open Day This day at St Mark's, Barton will bring together church, conservation, government and community groups to focus on the beauty of a grassland and its conservation.

7th Australasian Conference on Grassland Invertebrate Ecology, Perth, Western Australia, September 1999 Further information: John Matthiessen, CSIRO Entomology, Private Bag P.O., Wembley, WA 6014. Ph 08 9333 6641, fax 08 9333 6646, email johnm@ccmar.csiro.au Information also available at: <http://www.agric.wa.gov.au:7000/Ento/acgie/Default.htm>



NEWS ROUNDUP

Pasture Management Workshop

If you came to the 11 August workshop you know that it was a great success. One hundred people attended. It lived up to its objective to find common ground between production and conservation values. In our



next newsletter we shall include a major write-up – we are all too exhausted to do it in time for this newsletter. But we can fill you in on some of the background – see article on page 4.

Importance of Action Plans

The ACT Action Plans on various threatened species and ecosystems will be going to the Legislative Assembly soon for endorsement. This will assist to protect the grasslands and threatened species. But these Plans do not offer absolute protection.

Since the last newsletter, one grassland site in Action Plan No.1 (at Palmerston) has undergone urban development and parts of Conder Site 4 are under imminent destruction. In addition the ACT Government is drawing up plans for sub-divisions at the Belconnen Naval Station, and other areas mentioned in Action Plan 15 will also be compromised no doubt.

It is hard not to feel despondent but we need to work to save what is possible. It is important to know the individual sites and visits are essential. The first of what we hope are many tours of endangered sites, took place on 19 June. See article by Alan Ford on page 5.

A slide afternoon treat

On 24 July FOG fourteen members were treated to a wonderful slide afternoon and an opportunity to talk over a number of issues with some knowledgeable presenters. Suggest that if you missed this one make sure you catch it next year. See article on page 6.

Developments on the Monaro

Our last newsletter highlighted the Threatened Species Network Grant given to FOG for the Radio Hill and Adaminaby Golf Course sites. These grants will, we hope, give FOG a greater focus on the Monaro. While on-the-ground work has been a little slow, there has been a fair bit of behind-the-scenes discussions.

On the Radio Hill site, some weeding and surveying work has taken place. Fencing cannot go ahead until we have some further information on funding. An important element of this project will be community participation, and various contacts have been initiated in the Cooma community to facilitate this. Also the Cooma Monaro Express has publicised the project, as did the Canberra Times, recently. September 7, Threatened Species Day (see program on page 1) will be another way to focus on the site.

There have been a number of discussions with local community groups concerning the Adaminaby site. The NSW Department of Land and Water Conservation has prepared a *Draft Assessment of Crown Land at Adaminaby* (in respect of this site) and FOG has made a submission in respect of it.

Geoff Robertson, as FOG representative, at-



tended his first meeting of the Monaro Grasslands Advisory Committee on 5 August. This is a WWF committee to oversight the work of the Monaro Remnant Native Grasslands Project. David Eddy, the project officer, presented his highly informative final report and recommendations on phase 1 on public lands. Phase 2 will cover private lands.

FOG is also involved in the Kuma Reserve through Bob and June Wilkinson as reported in the last newsletter.



FOG dispersal

Have you noticed that FOG is subtly changing. It is becoming involved on many more fronts and getting much publicity. The FOG committee addressed this issue at its 22 June meeting. See report by Will Inveen on page 5.

Michael Treanor recently attended the *National Students and Sustainability' Environmental Conference* and ignited some interest in grassland issues. He is now following up how to get other grassland groups established. His report of the conference is on page 6.

Conservation Council and Environment Centre

FOG has been attempting to work more closely with both the Conservation Council for the South East Region and Canberra (CCSERAC) and the Environment Centre. CCSERAC and FOG have worked closely together on Conder. FOG was represented at the most recent quarterly meeting for CCSERAC and AGM for the Environment Centre. Geoff Robertson and Dierk von Behrens recently attended a weekend regional CCSERAC meeting at Bega – mostly forest people but by the end of the weekend they had heard a lot about grasslands.

CCSERAC has been undertaking a number of important initiatives on grasslands, including determining its position on ACT grassland conservation, negotiating a rural trust and pastoral management agreement strategy with ACT Rural Lessees, and developing its weeds strategy.

In July, eight FOG and CCSERAC members met to exchange information and work out ways to co-operate. FOG agreed to assist with the drafting of grassland policy and to work closely together on grassland issues. However, FOG is pretty over stretched and so if any member has some time to act as a go-between between FOG and CCSERAC, his or her efforts would be greatly appreciated.

Concerning the Environment Centre, FOG has arranged a 10% discount at the shop for its members. The FOG committee now holds its monthly meeting there.

Conder developments

Geoff Robertson attended the opening of the Conder Wetlands by the Minister for Urban Affairs, Brendan Smyth, and Ian Kiernan (Clean Up Australia) on 29 July. Many of you will have seen the local press coverage of the imminent development threat to the grassland. FOG had its grassland posters on display and Michael Bedingfield had his drawings and scrapbook on show. Geoff and Michael did a duo act presenting a talk and walk of the grassland site to an audience of about thirty people. Like most grassland events, the day was sunny and warm.

Geoff reports on the success (or lack of it) of FOG's attempts to save the grasslands at Conder in an article on page 7.

Community Garden Grants 1999 project

FOG has written a letter of support for a grant application to create a native plant display garden at the University of Canberra. The garden would be used to increase the plant knowledge of Landscape Architecture students, and, as it will be open to the public, to fulfil this role in the wider community.

Prison report

The Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety (ACT Legislative Assembly) has released its report on the siting of the prison. It commented favourably on FOG's submission (see last newsletter for details) which it considers gives it some room to manoeuvre on the prison siting.

Clare Bushcare Conference

A number of FOG members attended the *Balancing conservation and production in grassy landscapes*, Conference held on 19-21 August in Clare SA. There will be a report in the next newsletter.

Visiting properties and other sites

Members of the FOG committee have been visiting properties and other sites for some time now to advise on plant ID and grassland conservation strategies. We do not claim to be experts, nevertheless, the visits are often a useful start to grassland conservation.

Some of these visits have been made part of the FOG program, but now there are too many requests so visits are mostly quieter and lower key affairs. Each visit has its own interest and rewards. Not only is it an opportunity to introduce someone to grassland conservation, but often new insights and challenges are presented.

Many visits are in and around Canberra and Queanbeyan, but visits have also occurred at Murrumbateman, Yass, Taralga, Cooma, Tantawangalo, and Majors Creek. So while these quiet visits are not well publicised, if you want someone to have a look over a favourite site (your's or a friend's) just contact a member of the FOG committee.

Catchment Group has clearer vision

Literally, the Ginninderra Catchment Group can now see further thanks to the removal of many more of the willows along Ginninderra Creek. A recent Chronicle photo showed Maurice Griffin-Warwicke, long-time campaigner and leader against the willows, and



The audience at the recent FOG conference were treated to a full program of interesting and informative sessions. (Sorry about the quality of the pic.) See story Page 4!

coordinator Anna Brangwin and others standing among the fallen trees. Readers may recall FOG's visit to this site and its support for Maurice's endeavours. Congratulations.

State of Environment Reporting

Margaret Ning represented FOG at a demonstration of the State of the Environment Report 1997 produced by the Australian Capital region Leaders Forum. The report is in CD form and has an amazing amount of data. It is possible to get geographic maps about very small areas of Canberra and the South East Region of NSW. The CD is \$25 at the

Environment Centre shop.

ITINERARY FOR NORTHERN GRASSLANDS TOUR - 30 OCTOBER, 1999

Rainer Rehwinkel

(Those wanting to carpool or travel in convoy will depart at 8.20am from the Yowani Country Club (golf course) carpark which is just after the Netball Centre on Northbourne Ave. We shall proceed to Nanima Travelling Stock Reserve, which is on the road between Murrumbateman and Gundaroo. Head along the Barton Highway and just before Murrumbateman, turn right on the road to Gundaroo. The reserve is on the left (northern side of road) 6 or 8 k out. We aim to arrive there at 9:00.)

Nanima TSR has a diverse grassy woodland and some dry forest. There is also an area of natural grassland which unfortunately has been invaded by the dreaded Chilean Needle Grass. The woodland section is very good, and this site has been withdrawn from grazing because of the outbreak of salinity there. Expect to see orchids, lilies and various other forbs. Last year I recorded Regent Honeyeaters here. We'll stay here for 45 minutes or so to allow any stragglers to catch up.

From Nanima, we'll head to Bowning Cemetery. This site is a grassy woodland - natural grassland with high diversity containing a large population of Yass Daisy and many other interesting forbs.

Then on to Bookham Cemetery. This is a grassy woodland with Yass Daisy. Last year when I visited the cemetery, it was a sea of white and yellow with daisies and lilies. The woodland section of this site has a variety

of species including orchids.

There will be an opportunity to stop at Yass to buy lunch before the next site. Then, heading homewards via Taemas Bridge, we'll stop off at Cavan Creek Woolshed TSR. This is a White Box woodland, again with a high diversity of forbs and orchids. I collected a dead specimen of Rosenberg's Monitor at this site last year. While there are no guarantees of seeing this species, other wildlife species are sure to be encountered. There are a couple of other TSRs on the route between here and the ACT, that if we have time for, we can stop at too.

A MAJOR EFFORT FOR WORKSHOP

Geoff Robertson

In our next issue we will have a write-up of the Pasture Management Workshop held on 11 August. A tremendous effort went into organising the workshop and FOGGERS will be interested in how this was achieved.

The driving force was our Convenor Leon Horsnell who worked so hard, put his business on hold, and pushed many of us to our limits. Leon, congratulations and thanks.

When Leon first suggested the workshop there were a few raised eyebrows – what has pasture production got to do with conservation and vice versa. There was prejudice on both sides to be addressed. But he had obviously hit on a winner because after many months of planning, speakers, sponsors and supporters very willingly signed up.

There would have been no workshop without Professor David Kemp who inspired the theme for the workshop. He came on board and provided tremendous support, suggestions, and leadership. A very special thanks to him and to our other well-known and talented speakers: Peter Simpson, Peter Dowling, Warren King, David Kemp, Col Langford, Joe Baker, Sarah Sharp, Josh Dorrough and Andrew Young. Also thanks to those who chaired the sessions for their insights and wit – David Eddy, Denys Garden and Art Langston.

A bevy of sponsors also came on board. This is a compliment to FOG and recognition of past hard work. Sponsors provided speakers, financial and other support. They included Orange Agricultural College (University of Sydney), CRC for Weed Management Systems, NSW Agriculture, Environment ACT, and ACT Rural Lessees Association. Thank you all for your enthusiastic support. Supporters included Lanyon Bowl Landcare, Paddy's River Landcare, Reedy Creek Landcare, Yass Area Network of Landcare Groups, the Upper Murrumbidgee Catchment Co-ordinating Committee, the Conservation Council and WWF. Thank you for

your tremendous support.

There was wide mention of the workshop throughout conservation group and landcare newsletters. The workshop committee despatched many hundreds of hand-addressed letters to members of landcare groups and to members of the ACT Rural Lessees. Some parkcare and landcare co-ordinators also distributed many pamphlets. The press throughout the region (the Land, Canberra Times, Queanbeyan Age, Cooma Monaro Express, Flat Chat (Captain's Flat), Stoney Creek Gazette, etc.) ran stories on the workshop. So, apart from those who attended, the workshop came to the attention of many rural and landcare people throughout the region.

Thanks again to our member and artist, Michael Bedingfield, who supplied those fabulous drawings for the brochure.

Finally, a big thanks must go to the workshop committee. Apart from Leon almost all committee members played a big part in scoping the workshop, selecting and approaching speakers, organising the brochure and publicity, spreading the word, labelling, preparing and working on the day.

Also thanks to other FOGGERS who assisted on the day, helping it to run smoothly. The Kangaroo Club also did an outstanding job in providing the facilities and catering. Thanks to all for an outstanding effort.



Photos from the conference are as rare as high quality native temperate grassland areas but we got a few!

Top: Art Langston and Leon Horsnell discuss the issues between sessions.

Middle: Will Inveen and Jean Geue learning how to assess ground cover mass and get some sun at the same time.

Bottom: John Betts' and Tony and Daryl Wilson's display of commercially available native grasses and their seed harvester proved to be very popular.



ACT GRASSLAND ACTION PLAN - TOUR OF NORTHERN SITES

Alan Ford

On Saturday 19 June six members undertook a tour of selected northern sites in the Grassland Action Plan for the ACT. We did not attempt to go on to the large grassland reserves but concentrated on the lesser-known areas. It was an attempt to mix important sites with those that would not survive or only survive in part.

We commenced with two sites in Gungahlin, 7, which is a remnant, and 4, which is planned to become a road reserve. The latter has *Chrysocephalum apiculatum* and Blue Devil (*Eryngium ovinum*) and would clearly be interesting at the right time of year.

From there we looked at the location of site 2 on 'Koorinal' followed by Hall cemetery. The cemetery is the site of a rare orchid, but we found *Chrysocephalum semipapposum* on it - a change from its relative referred to above. From there to Dunlop - site 3 in the Action Plan. This is clearly an important site and hopefully will survive the development of suburbia in the vicinity.

The last site of the morning was the northern section of Umbagog Park - site 16.

The afternoon was concerned mainly with sites in the vicinity of Mitchell, starting with the location of 14 and continuing to search for 12 (on Wells Station Road) and noting where 11 was in passing. From there we continued into Mitchell to the edge of site 10. It is planned that this be some form of local park and it is clearly worth saving. On the edge we found (apart from *C. apiculatum*, which was the signature plant that we found on the grassland remnants throughout the day) *Calocephalus citreus*. This is thought by one local expert to be a declining plant in our area. We found this plant outside the fence, in the ungrazed area.

The day concluded with a visit to Campbell Park offices - site 27, which is a striking piece of native grassland.

One thing about this winter tour was that the party was able to recognise some plants from their general look or their remains, notably:

- *Chrysocephalum apiculatum*
- *Calocephalus citreus*
- *Vittadinia sp.*
- *Eryngium ovinum*

While it was difficult to do much about the grasses, *Themeda*, *Danthonia* and *Stipa* could be recognised if there was some of the plant



Naarilla Hirsch did a great job helping make the conference run smoothly. Thanks Naarilla.

available. I think this proved that it is possible to learn to recognise the basis of a native grassland when one comes across a remnant, even in winter.

We used the map in Action Plan 1 and found that quite adequate for our purposes.

MEETING AT MUGGA-MUGGA

Will Inveen

On Tuesday the 22 June, with a roaring fire and plenty of food to get the conversation flowing, the FOG Committee held their monthly meeting at Mugga-Mugga. The meeting had a different format to the usual committee meetings. There was no set agenda, rather all of the time was set aside for an open discussion on where FOG was heading and what our future directions might be.

The format of the meeting proved to be a success with many interesting and worthwhile questions and ideas being raised and discussed. The most fundamental of the questions raised asked why FOG actually exists and what are we trying to do as an organisation. As a result of this and other similar questions being raised, it was suggested that the development of a 3 or 5 year strategic plan may provide us with the answers. There was strong agreement that this should be a short document, written in plain language, to maximise its usefulness, which contained general

statements about what we should be aiming to do in the next 3 to 5 years and ways we might like to achieve these goals.

Other more general ideas and points were also discussed. The idea of adopting a site was brought up. This is not a new suggestion but one which may be well suited to the

future of FOG. It was also decided that it would be useful to review how FOG is linked to other groups which deal with grassland ecology and conservation and how we fit into the national grassland conservation scheme. It was generally agreed by the end of the meeting that this is something we need to look at so information about grassland conservation can be spread more easily and effectively. Linking with other groups may also open opportunities for different events and excursions in the future.

Education and FOG's role in delivering grassland education programs was also discussed. It was suggested that FOG may run specifically targeted education programs in the future to attract a wider audience to FOG events, as well as make a wider variety of events available to members.

Overall, the committee members present at the meeting felt the session was very useful and constructive and has brought many exciting new (and some not so new) prospects to the surface.

The committee would be more than happy to hear any suggestions from members in regard to the future direction of FOG, ideas for future activities, links with other groups, educational strategies, etc. Contact any of the committee members (details on page 12) if you wish to contribute to this process.

CHAINING YOURSELF TO A BLADE OF GRASS

Michael Treanor

On 12 to 16 July, I attended the *National Students and Sustainability 'Environmental Conference'* at the University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury Campus. This was my third S & S conference (the previous two were in Townsville and Hobart). It is the major environmental forum for students and other young (and not-so-young) activists with over 600 people attending from most universities and states.

As a member of Friends of Grasslands I thought it was about time that such an influential and active collection of conservationists stopped not seeing 'the grassland for the forest'. Nearly all 'publicity' about the environment and the groups and individuals that are helping to save it is orientated towards 'saving the trees' or 'stopping the mining at Jabiluka', both of which are, apart from being popular, obvious and easy to see or visualise at any rate. On the other hand grasslands are not particularly obvious and are always the first to be developed, grazed or basically brutally assaulted.

After having been to the other two conferences I thought that it was my turn to give back to the people who had provided me with so much information and motivation in the past, so, being a recent grassland 'convert', I decided to do a workshop.

I decided to entitle the workshop "Chaining Yourself to a Blade of Grass" in protest at the emphasis that forests and the like have been given in the past and present. I tried to cover as much as I could in the hour and a half, which was a fair bit! I talked about what was left, how important it is, how to identify and manage it, and finally how to get involved and help the valuable grasslands that basically everyone in Australia has in one form or another. I also discussed the actions of Greenpeace in getting herbicides banned that are being used

to help save grasslands, and projects such as the 'Billion Tree Project' that can threaten grasslands.

The workshop title and abstract obviously struck a chord with a large number of people, and I ended getting one of the largest crowds to the workshop! It was great to see that people saw that the emphasis on saving the forests had blinded them to the beauty, rarity and consequential importance of grasslands and their conservation. I picked up lots of new 'converts' along the way and I was still being asked questions about the workshop days after, mainly by people that didn't even go! I now have a mailing list and a heap of people that are interested in starting groups similar to FOG in 3 other states! Community, particularly students and current activists, need to be informed and motivated about grasslands and what they can do to help! For more information about the talk or the conference (it's in Brisbane next year!) contact Michael Treanor (see back of newsletter).

valleys of the Naas/Gudgenby area. Frank has worked in this area for many years and is very familiar with it at every level - largely through walking over it. He started at the broadest perspective showing aerial photos of the different landforms and land uses. He placed the grasslands into the broader landscape and historical context. He dealt with problems of weeds. The *coup de grace* was the many and intimate slides he took of many flowering species - always a favourite with FOGGERS.

Anne I'Ons' (Parkcare Co-ordinator for Mount Taylor) presentation was "Hard yakka and its joyous rewards" showing what years of effort could do to restore the Mount Taylor grassland. Her slides showed a diverse grassy woodland. She described the scene before the "hard yakka" when Mt. Taylor was largely a diverse weedland and hardly recognisable by today's standard. A feeling of excitement ran through the audience as her work and that of her fellow parkcarers, has demonstrated that a lot can be recovered working with nature.

David Eddy, an artist and teacher with a camera, reminded us of many of our experiences on previous field trips as he showed a number of landscape and individual species. David likes to capture the changing seasons. One of his techniques is to take a photo from a particular fence post and return to take a further photo at the same spot at other times. So one photo may be a dried off and unexciting grassland and the next a brilliant display of colour (at the same spot). A startling slide was a Monaro Golden Daisy (foreground) with the radio tower (of Radio Hill) in the distance and to its right the town of Cooma.

Our host was the Mugga-Mugga Education Centre. Apart from the slides there was the opportunity for some talking and catching up. Thanks all.



Harold Adams from the Rural Lessees Association opened the conference and is seen here with others learning how to assess dry vegetation cover- The oval contained an estimated 2000 kg/ha of cover!

SLIDES AT MUGGA-MUGGA

Geoff Robertson

The slide afternoon on 24 July was a treat and an opportunity to talk over grassland issues. Frank Ingwersen (Senior Plant Ecologist, Wildlife and Research Monitoring Unit, Environment ACT) kicked off with an excellent presentation on the grassy mountain



CONDER - A MIXED OUTCOME?

Geoff Robertson

FOG's latest submission to the Minister for Urban Affairs, Brendan Smyth, on Conder was a joint submission with the Conder Community Landcare Group and Clean Up Australia 2001, supported by the Conservation Council, Canberra Field Naturalists, Conder Residents Action Group, Canberra Ornithologists Group, and the Society for Growing Australian Plants, Canberra Region. Simon Corbell (Opposition Spokesman on the Environment) and John Hargreaves (Member for Molonglo) took up the matter with Brendan, who now seems immovable.

Officials from PALM met Michael Bedingfield and me at the site recently to show how the planned development would affect the site. They explained the Government's view that there is an enormous demand for housing blocks and the Government plans to release a very large number in the Conder area in the next two years. The Conder 9 site will be put into a reserve. The PALM officials said that Site 4 will be developed. However as a compromise there will be a (token) 10-meter corridor and that part of Site 4 will be saved.

So maybe we can all pat ourselves on the back for a good compromise. The next round in the negotiations will be over what to conserve in east O'Malley, Gungahlin and the Belconnen Naval Station.

However, many view the "compromise" as a loss. The Government will fill its coffers from the staggering urban development that will take place in Conder. ACT Chief Minister,

Kate Carnell, in the Canberra Times (7 August) when handing over the Treasury function to Gary Humphries claimed to have balanced the budget and have years of surplus ahead. According to Michael it was never part of the plan to develop the alleged "saved" portion of Site 4. In the circumstances, the Government could not have done anything less than save something. Simon Corbell has taken up the issue in the public arena.

Site 4 in the Action Plan is designated as of "high" conservation value (not "very high" as for Conder 9). There are two halves, one appears to have little under storey value and the other, has a truly impressive array of 120 plus species, which last spring flowered in profusion. A problem in assessing grassland sites is that, unless a site is monitored over some time, it is not clear just what exists

at the site. In our submissions we have pointed out this anomaly and have indicated that that portion with the good under storey should be saved and how this can be achieved while at the same time meeting resident and other needs for road extension. There is also a possibility of taking more of the not-so-good part of the "saved" 4 for development, which should assist Government revenue needs.

Before the bull dozers go through there is still hope for some reconsideration.



Is the writing on the wall for Conder? Well, the plan is certainly on the sign, seen here at the site.

BARRACKS FLAT RESERVE

A public meeting was held in Queanbeyan on 2 August to obtain input to a Plan of Management for the reserve which contains a grassland remnant and the vulnerable Pink-tailed Worm Lizard (*Aprasia parapulchella*). The meeting was well organised and well attended. A wide variety of views were expressed and there was consensus on many points relating to balancing conservation and passive recreational values. Michael Treanor is the project officer – please contact him for further information.



Recognise this local grassland? Email Will (address back page) if you know where it is!

POPLARS' UPDATE

Cr Tom Baker, Queanbeyan City Council

The 'Poplars' development in Queanbeyan is currently subject to public attention in the region, following Queanbeyan City Council's resolution to rezone part of the privately owned 'Poplars' estate from 1(a) (rural zone) to residential development. The site lies within the main flight path to Canberra Airport. The Poplars lies along Lanyon Drive, just south west of Queanbeyan Cemetery and is divided into 2 sections by Tomsitt Drive, the access to Jerrabomberra Park (see map). The Recommendations are with the State Planning Minister.

Both sections of the Poplars contain considerable native grasslands comprising stipa, danthonia species and habitat for existing Button Wrinklewort (*Rutidosia leptorrhynchoides*) to the north and the Grassland Earless Dragon (*Tympanocryptis lineata pingicollis*) to the south west. It is likely that the Golden Sun Moth (*Synemon plana*) is present and possibly the Striped Legless Lizard (*Delma impar*). The site lies on the edge of the 'treeless plain' as does the adjacent Letchworth crown land site across Lanyon Drive and promising temperate grasslands to the south west.

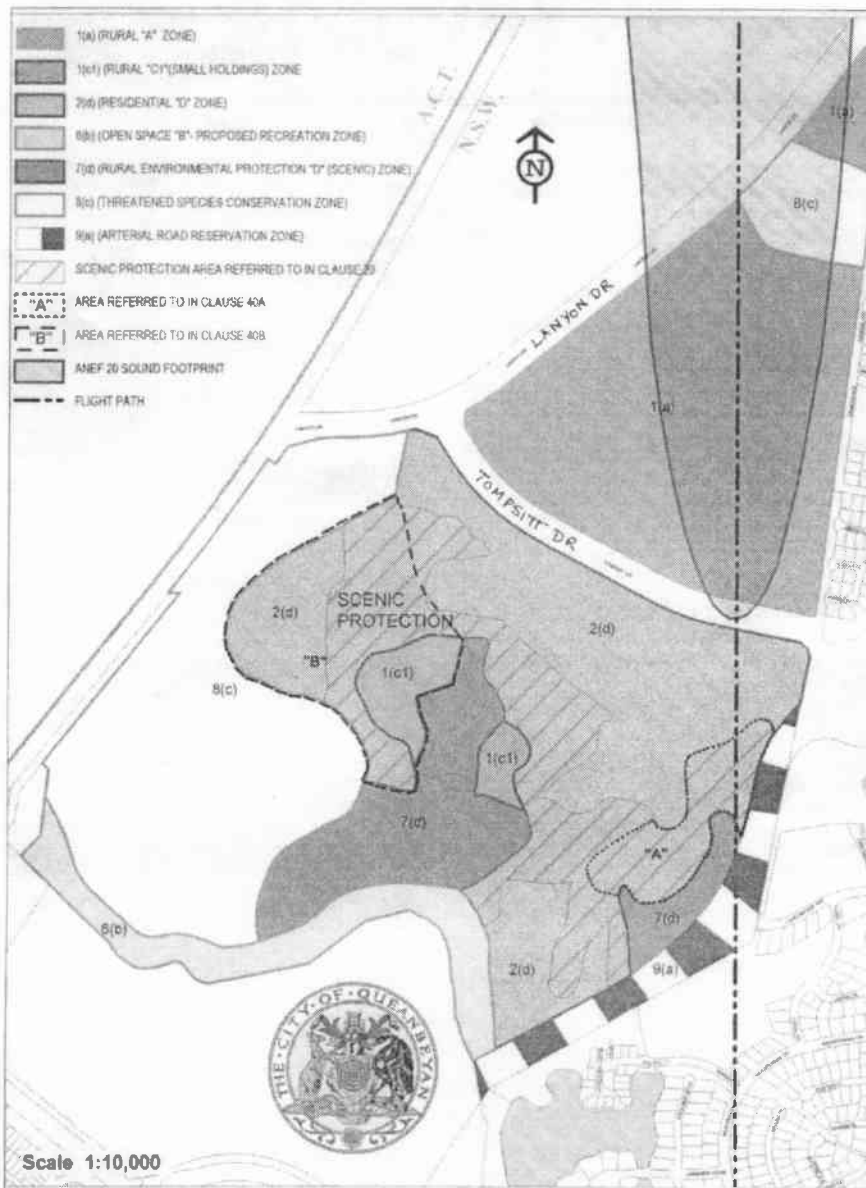
The proposal to develop the Poplars has been around for some time. In 1994, Queanbeyan City Council agreed to undertake a public hearing as part of the community consultations on the development proposal. The Hearing received a number of submissions, including well-researched submissions from Friends of Grasslands and the Monaro Conservation Society which called for the Hearing. A highly significant outcome of the Hearing was the establishment of the joint Regional Biodiversity Survey Working Group, involving the Housing Industry Association, local councils and agency stakeholders to develop a regional strategy for the conservation of grassy ecosystems and also to provide an information base and more certainty for development decisions in sensitive areas.

Australian Air Services recently revised its aircraft noise con-

tours for Canberra Airport. The new contours provide a predicted likely exposure for the next couple of decades taking into account all factors. Australian Standard AS2021 allows residential development as acceptable in areas bound by 25 ANEF units. Beyond 25 is unacceptable and between 25 and 20, would require sound proofing for comfort. As the map shows, the section south of

Tomsitt Drive lies outside the 20 ANEF contour.

Proposed Rezoning of "The Poplars" Queanbeyan



Council, in considering this matter following the release of the noise exposure contours, chose to exclude the northern section from the rezoning recommendation, because of higher noise exposure. Council also supported the proposal to include two 8 (c) reserves, one in the north of about 6.5 hectares for a large colony of the rare and endangered Button Wrinklewort and a larger reserve to the south west, straddling Jerrabomberra Creek and an elevated environmental protection zone for the grassland earless dragon (the map shows details).

Queanbeyan City Council has assessed this private development as complying with all standards. Council went further to exclude all the Poplars land north of Tomsitt Drive.

The decision lies with the State Minister. If this land is not zoned for residential purposes, the outlook for conservation is also uncertain.

One possible solution is for Canberra International Airport to buy the land, which has been devalued through the CIA publicity campaign. The Airport Users Group supports this solution (Queanbeyan Age 7/6/99). The northern section could be developed as a Farm/Conservation/Cultural Tourist facility, as recommended on a smaller scale in the Public Hearing and other pockets could be used for commerce, transport, cemetery, nurseries or sporting facilities. The environmentally sensitive areas could be managed with the 'Airport's own threatened native grasslands.

I can't see how Queanbeyan City Council can afford to be the beneficent investor/developer but has demonstrated that it sees itself as the conservator.

BOOK REVIEW

Naarilla Hirsch

City parks and cemeteries: Tasmania's remnant grasslands and grassy woodlands by Jamie Kirkpatrick, Louise Gilfedder and Rod Fensham, Tasmanian Conservation Trust, 1988

While this is not a new book, it has recently reappeared in Canberra bookshops, so I thought it might be worth a quick review. The book is the result of a survey of Tasmanian remnant grassy ecosystems. As such it contains a considerable amount of scientific information, including distribution maps for grassland and grassy woodland communities, and distribution maps for unreserved species from Tasmania's grassy ecosystems, and the frequency of species occurring in Tasmania's grassy ecosystems by community. It also contains information on some grassland species that are thought to have been useful to Aborigines, e.g. as food, medicine or for implements.

Tasmanian grassland plants are described individually and in detail, together with their scientific and common names and their status. Most are illustrated by line drawings (which are grouped together in the centre of the book). The different grassland communities (a total of 37) are also described. There are interesting chapters on the history of grassy vegetation (and human use of it from the stone ages on) and the ecology of grassy ecosystems. The final chapter discusses conservation concerns and strategies for grassy ecosystems in Tasmania, with specific reference to endangered and vulnerable species and reservation status of the 37 different grassland communities. While this book is more scientific in its style than the recently published field guides, it is very interesting, as well as being the first thing to pack on a trip to Tasmania.

For details of any of the above, phone Naarilla Hirsch on 6289 8660 (W).



ENVIRONMENT CENTRE BOOKSHOP - DISCOUNT FOR FOG MEMBERS

Don't forget the 10% discount being given to FOG members on presentation of this article. In addition to the wide range of books on natural history and the environment, the shop carries environmentally friendly products and novel gift ideas, and is well worth a visit. Products include maps, educational toys and games, calendars, diaries, homemade stationery, natural cosmetics and dental care products. Any surplus from the shop supports the extensive Environment Centre library and their other activities. Their address is Kingsley St, Acton, opposite Toad Hall at the ANU.

The Canberra Environment Centre is a public resource Centre founded in 1974 to promote environmental and social awareness via public education. If you become a friend of the Centre you are not only supporting their activities but you will receive a 10% discount at the shop, a subscription to 'Bogong' quarterly journal and their monthly newsletter 'Sustainable Times'. Opening hours are 9am to 5pm Tuesday to Friday, and 10am to 1pm on Saturday. For more details contact the Centre on 6247 3064 (shop) or 6248 0885 (library).

NEWSLETTERS RECEIVED

Naarilla Hirsch

Australian National Insect Collection

The latest newsletter of the Australian National Insect Collection has an article on "Beetles of the world". This is a computer-based system for identifying beetles, which also describes and illustrates the diversity of beetles. The newsletter was accompanied by brochures for a number of books and other products. One was for LucID Professional, which lets you construct and view interactive identification keys to almost anything - the brochure suggests it might be useful for land managers requiring diagnostic tools for land and water problems. Others were for books on the biology and identification of Australian ants, a catalogue of Geometrid moths of the world, and monographs on the biology of Australian butterflies.

Threatened Species Network

The Threatened Species Network (NSW) newsletter, *The Web*, has an article on the recent environment grants to community groups, of which FOG was a recipient for the

Radio Hill/Adaminaby Golf Course project. The Threatened Species Network is a community-based program of the World Wide Fund for Nature. The Network aims to increase public awareness, support for and involvement in the protection of threatened species and ecological communities. Its activities include restoring and enhancing key habitat areas, establishing conservation management agreements FOG controlling feral animals and weeds, flora and fauna surveys and monitoring programs, fencing remnant habitat, and propagation and planting of threatened plant species.

Its web site is www.nccnsw.org.au/member/tsn, and a number of other environmental web sites are listed in the newsletter. There is a short article about a survey of the regent honeyeater, and another about a project to improve conservation of grassy white box woodlands along the lower western slopes of the Great Dividing Range. *The Web* also contains an update on environmental legislation and a calendar of events to December 1999. Local ones are a series of monthly CSIRO seminars (contact is Monica van Wensveen on 02-6242 1651):

- 13 August - From vermin to living landscapes
- 17 September - Saltbush, stock and satellites: the landscape ecology of living on the rangelands
- 22 October - Love 'em, hate 'em, eat 'em: reflection on people and wildlife
- 19 November - Society's perceptions of wildlife

GRASSES ON THE WEB

Will Inveen

This article is the first in a series which looks at some of the sites on the internet which members may find interesting or useful. I got the idea for this column when I was searching for sites with information on Australian grasslands and Australian grassland species. Search engines such as Yahoo! and Lycos didn't come up with anything useful. There was plenty of information about where to get Kentucky Bluegrass and how to grow it. There was also a lot of information about some very nice sounding tourist resorts in the Prairie Grasslands in the United States, but nothing of relevance to what I wanted. Because of this I had to use a bit of guesswork on where to find stuff. Put the sites cited in this series in your *Favourites* folder for future use!

If you are looking for a wide variety of general material on Australian native plants then first stop should be the Australian National Botanic Gardens (ANBG) site. You will find it at: <http://155.187.10.12/anbg/>

The site is very extensive, with information on topics such as propagation of Australian plants, traditional Aboriginal use of selected native species, what's presently in flower at the gardens, drawings, an extensive gallery of photographs of native plants, educational information and maps showing how to get to and around the gardens. Feels like I have visited the place without having left my study! I have heard rumours through the grape vine that this is the biggest web site in Australia. After surfing it solidly for 2 hours and having only seen a fraction of what it had to offer, I well and truly believe it!

The living collection at the Gardens is dominated by trees and shrubs, thus the web site has an emphasis on trees and shrubs. If you are looking for tips on how to propagate grasses, where to buy grass seeds, detailed info on grasslands, then you may have to explore some of the links found on the site. There are plenty of good links, so this page is at the least a good gateway to the grassland info you may be seeking.

There is a good range of photos of native grassland species and some very interesting information about traditional Aboriginal use of grassland plants. The site claims to have the facility to look up where particular species are in the gardens but it didn't want to work for me. Maybe a bad day! None the less, you may be able to look up the location of your favourite grassland species and then go and check it out!

For those looking for more technical information on grassland species, the *For The More Serious Botanist* section has some good links which might bring you joy. It goes without saying that there is hours of surfing within just a few of those links so I will explore some of them in later issues.

If you know of any other good sites which I may be unaware of and you think would be good for FOG members to know about, mail me on will@dynamite.com.au

See ya next issue!

MOUNT JERRABOMBERRA - THE LAST STAND

Indra Esguerra

You may have heard of Mt Jerrabomberra, as there have been many campaigns over

the decades to protect this beautiful area in Queanbeyan, close to the ACT border. It is the last mountain in our region which has escaped logging and grazing, thus the understorey is still intact and at one time would have covered millions of hectares.

The mountain, which covers an area of about 300 hectares, is currently under threat of subdivision for residential development.

Ecological values

In 1992, Mt Jerrabomberra was listed as National Estate by the Australian Heritage Commission because of its significant stands of rare and vulnerable native plant species and their communities.

The woodlands and grasslands on Mt Jerrabomberra and its lower slopes have retained, so far, species of plants that used to grow over vast areas of the ACT and SE NSW region. The mountain area is covered with a variety of native vegetation climaxes, including dry sclerophyll forest, savannah woodland, native grassland, acacia thicket regrowth, numerous wildflowers, herbfields and heaths. The main community on Mt Jerrabomberra is a *Eucalyptus macrorhynca* (Red stringybark) - *Eucalyptus polyanthemus* (Red box) grassy woodland, an association which is vulnerable in NSW. According to the NSW NPWS, the vegetation community on the mountain is a benchmark or template for education and research.

The understorey includes: intact herbfields, including significant stands of the nationally endangered *Rutidosia leptorrhynchoideis* (Button wrinklewort); populations of two regionally uncommon plant species; a largely intact Tea Tree community which harbours various terrestrial orchid species; *Acacia pycnantha* (Australia's national floral emblem) and *Grevillea ramossissima*, which are at their known range limits; and a number of native grass species.

There have recently been claims that half of all Australia's native bird species will be wiped out in 50 years. Mount Jerrabomberra is habitat for 74 species. This habitat is threatened by the Jerrabomberra Heights development.

Indigenous heritage value

Not only is Mt Jerrabomberra important for ecological reasons, it is an important aboriginal heritage area. Numerous scar trees and indigenous artefacts have been found in the area over the years. The Ngunnawal people have expressed concern about the destruction of their heritage. There are scar

trees in the area soon to be cleared.

Protect the mountain

The Mount Jerrabomberra Preservation Society argues that these developments should never have been approved, that the last remaining areas of native vegetation - now even more rare - should not be developed, and that all remaining lower-slopes should be incorporated in a reserve with the upper mountain.

How can you help?

Despite a long struggle to protect the mountain, development continues in areas of increasing environmental importance. The Mt Jerrabomberra Preservation Society needs your assistance to protect the mountain and its lower slopes. Our phone number is 6262 8488.

Please write to the following ministers expressing your concern:

Premier Bob Carr; Environment Minister - Bob Debus; and Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning - Andrew Refshauge,

c/o Parliament House, Macquarie St, Sydney NSW 2000.



Sick of mowing the lawn? It's just about spring time, a great time to put in some lovely native grasses. They are attractive, use less water than most lawns and are great habitat for native species.

ACTION PLANS FOR ENDANGERED AND VULNERABLE SPECIES

Naarilla Hirsch

Action plan for the Northern Corroboree Frog

The Northern Corroboree Frog is a small frog with yellow and black stripes which occurs in the high country of the ACT. A similar frog, the Southern Corroboree Frog, is found in the Snowy Mountains. In the breeding season it is found in areas with pools and seepage in sphagnum bogs, wet tussock grasslands and wet heath. Otherwise it is found in forest, sub-alpine woodland and heath adjacent to the breeding area.

It was declared vulnerable in the ACT because it is recognised as vulnerable on international and national listings. It is at risk of premature extinction in the ACT in the medium term. This is due to severe decline in population or distribution, and continuing decline or unnaturally extreme fluctuations in population or distribution



for a species currently occurring over a small range or having a small area of occupancy within its range.

Conservation objectives are to participate in research, monitoring and experimental management aimed at identifying the cause of the continuing population decline and preventing it. Objectives also include protecting sites and vegetation communities that are critical to the survival of the species (including the Ramsar listed Ginini Flat Subalpine Bog Complex in the ACT).



Intended management actions cover a range of activities, including control of feral animals (especially pigs) and restriction of heavy machinery around wetlands where the frog breeds, and no deliberate burning in these areas. Environment ACT will participate in activities of the Corroboree Frog National Recovery Team, such as a survey of its distribution, monitoring of long term population trends, and research into population charac-

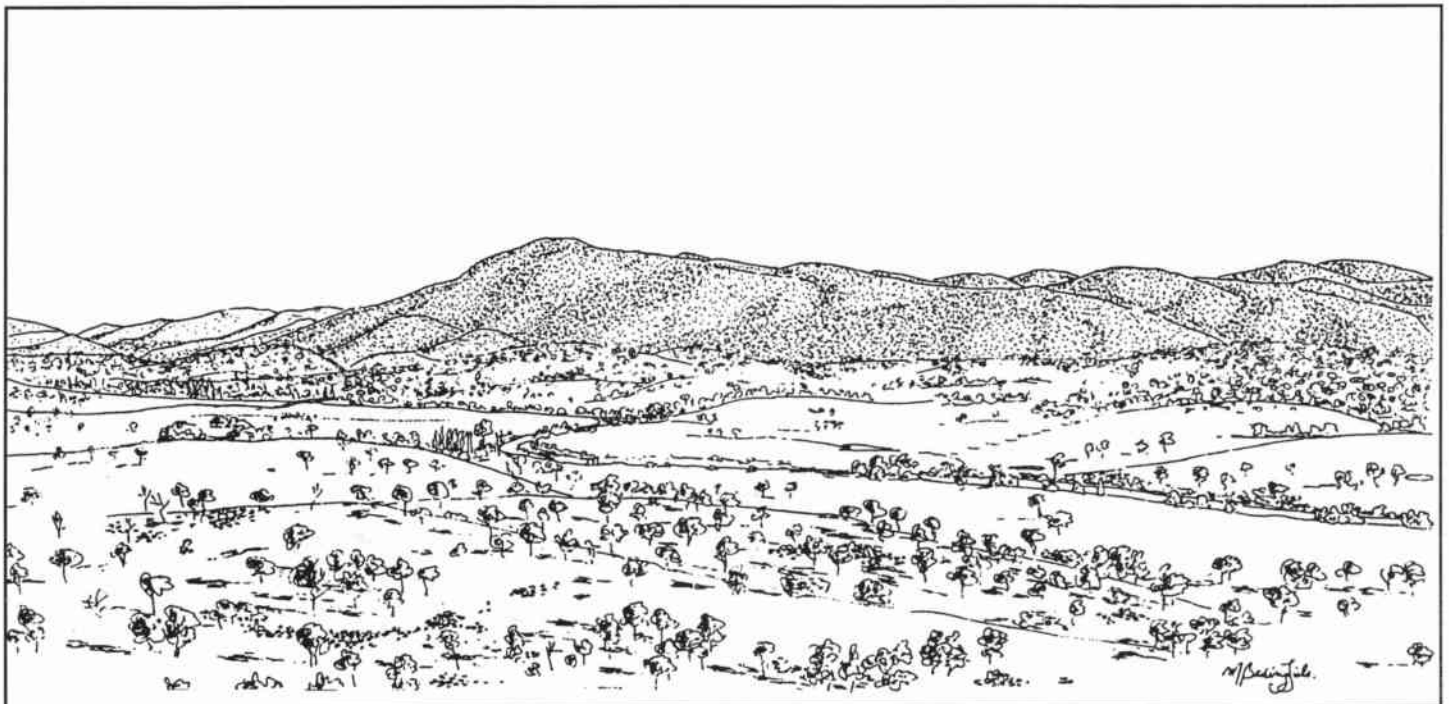
teristics (eg. breeding success and tadpole survival) and global climatic influences on the frogs. The breeding area at Ginini Flats will be protected, with a policy developed to cover the activities of land managers, the general public and researchers, and guidelines developed for park access, and interpretation and development of walking trails and vehicle management tracks.

Source: ACT Government, 1997.

Corroboree Frog (*Pseudophryne corroboree*): *An endangered species.* Action Plan No. 6. Environment ACT, Canberra.



Below is Michael Bedingfield's drawing which appeared on the FOG Conference flier. Thanks for the great picture Michael! The lineart drawings which appear on pages 2, 3, 5 and 9 are also Michael's work.



Mount Tennant, Lanyon and Murrumbidgee River

FRIENDS OF GRASSLANDS INC*Supporting native grassy ecosystems***Address: PO Box 987, Civic Square ACT 2608**Web address: <http://www.geocities.com/Rainforest/Vines/7769/index.html>**Your committee:**

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**FRIENDS OF GRASSLANDS
NEWSLETTER**

You have read this far, so we must have kept your interest. If you are not a member of Friends of Grasslands why not subscribe to the newsletter? It comes out six times a year and contains a lot of information on native grassland issues.

You can get the newsletter by joining Friends of Grasslands. You do not need to be an active member - some who join often have many commitments and only wish to receive the newsletter.

However, if you own or lease a property, are a member of a landcare group, or actively interested in grassland conservation or revegetation, we hope we have something to offer you. We may assist by visit-

ing sites and identifying native species and harmful weeds. We can suggest conservation and revegetation goals as well as management options, help document the site, and sometimes support applications for assistance, etc.

Of course you may wish to increase your own understanding of grasslands, plant identification, etc. and so take a more active interest in our activities. Most activities are free and we also try to arrange transport (or car pool) to activities.

If you are already a member, you might encourage friends to join, or even make a gift of membership to someone else. We will also send one complimentary newsletter to anyone who wants to know more about us.

**HOW TO JOIN FRIENDS OF
GRASSLANDS**

Send us details of your name, address, telephone, fax, and e-mail, etc. You might also indicate your interests in grassland issues. Membership is \$20 for an individual or family; \$5 for students, unemployed or pensioners; and \$50 for corporations or organisations - the latter can request two newsletters be sent. Please make cheques payable to Friends of Grasslands Inc.

If you would like any further information about membership please contact Margaret Ning, or if you would like to discuss FOG issues contact Geoff Robertson. Contact details are given in the box above.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Friends of Grasslands Inc
PO Box 987
Civic Square ACT 2608