



News of Friends of Grasslands

Supporting native grassy ecosystems

March-April 2004



Program

Thurs 4 Mar (5:30 to 9pm) - Community forum on the *Draft ACT Natural Temperate Grassland Conservation Strategy*. You need to book. See ACT grassland forum, page 2.

Sat 6 March - Boggy ecosystems trip. With Geoff Hope we shall visit bogs (Gingera Road) after the January 2003 bushfire and hear plans for restoration. We plan to visit other fire damage areas and regeneration. Bring lunch. Meet at Unwin Place, Weston, outside Police College at 8:30am for car pooling. Inquiries: Rosemary 6258 4724.

Sat 20 March (9am to 4pm) - FOG Display: Australian National Botanic Gardens car park. See the wonderful new FOG grassland posters that turned heads at the Stipa Conference and a selection of grasses. This is an opportunity to learn more about FOG. Also we need some help (see Assistance needed with FOG display, page 2).

Sat 24 April - Gentian Swamp and grasslands in Wadbilliga NP. In April 2003, the flowering was spectacular. Meet at Nimmitabel Bakery at 9am or Wadbilliga Trig turn-off on Countegany Rd 10am. Bring gum boots. Inquiries Margaret 6241 4065

If red dot on label - please renew membership

For those of you who have not renewed, we are enclosing a further renewal notice. Please complete it and send it in, otherwise this will be your last newsletter. If you have received a renewal form and think you have already sent us a cheque (unless it has been in the last few days), or with any other inquiries, please contact Margaret on 6241 4065.

Tasmanian natural temperate grassy ecosystems

A powerful image even if only in black and white of FOG members and hosts assembling on Township Lagoon Nature Reserve. Natural temperate grassland (foreground), a magnificent salt lake (middle), farmland (further back), and mountains and awesome clouds (rear).

News Roundup

FOG AGM

FOG held its AGM on Sat 21 February but that was after this issue of the newsletter was put to bed. Normally the newsletter is printed and in the post by the last Tuesday of the preceding month. A full report of the AGM will appear in the next issue.

Assistance needed with FOG display

A FOG display will be held on Saturday 20 March at the Australian Native Plant Society March sale (see program on front page for detail). This will be an excellent opportunity for new members to learn more about FOG and enjoy an hour or two together.

We need help in several ways: if any members have grass or grassland plant specimens we'd be grateful for a loan. If you have any handouts on grassy issues, we will hand these out. We would also welcome people to be part of a roster for the stall for an hour or two. Please contact Rosemary Blemings 6258 4724 if you're able to be part of the rostered team, or provide plants or handouts.

ACT grassland forum

The ACT Government invites FOG members to a community forum on the *Draft ACT Natural Temperate Grassland Conservation Strategy*. (Details of the time, venue, background material, and booking arrangements are given below.) The *Draft Strategy* will cover ACT natural temperate grasslands and related species. It is important for FOG members to attend.

In 2002 the ACT Government introduced a *New Focus for Nature Conservation in the ACT*, which includes development of conservation strategies for priority species and ecological communities. It is expected that the first of

these strategies, the *ACT Lowland Woodland Conservation Strategy* (Action Plan 27), will be released early this year. The forum will address the development of the second strategy with an ecological community focus, the *ACT Natural Temperate Grassland Conservation Strategy*.

The Natural Temperate Grassland Ecological Community is a native ecological community that is dominated by native perennial grasses. There is also a diversity of native herbaceous plants (forbs) present. An important characteristic of the community is that it is naturally treeless or contains few trees (less than one per hectare). Natural temperate grassland is probably Australia's most threatened ecosystem. In south-eastern Australia, 99.5% of the estimated pre-European natural temperate grassland has been destroyed or grossly altered. Some form of degrading disturbance threatens all grassland remnants, even those in permanent reserves.

In 1996, natural temperate grassland in the ACT was declared an endangered ecological community under the *Nature Conservation Act 1980* (ACT) and an Action Plan (No. 1) for the community was prepared in 1997. Survey work undertaken up to that time enabled the Action Plan to list all the remaining natural temperate grasslands in the ACT and to indicate the presence of species of conservation significance. Subsequently, the grasslands have been monitored annually. Associated threatened and uncommon species have been monitored (known populations), surveys undertaken (to gain knowledge of distribution, abundance and habitat requirements), and specific studies commissioned. This has resulted in a comprehensive knowledge base to prepare the *Grassland Conservation Strategy*.

The *Natural Temperate Grassland Conservation Strategy* will supersede seven Action Plans (Natural Temperate Grassland, Striped Legless Lizard, Grassland Earless Dragon, Golden Sun Moth, Perunga Grasshopper, Button Wrinklewort and Ginninderra Peppercress). It also includes consideration of other lowland grasslands that have been highly modified and no longer represent the ecological community, as well as uncommon plant and animal grassland species not formally declared as threatened.

Natural Temperate Grassland of the Southern Tablelands of NSW and the ACT, and several of the plant and animal species to be included in the new ACT strategy, are also listed as threatened under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. The proposed *ACT Natural Temperate Grassland Conservation Strategy* will contain protection and management strategies that will be consistent with the National Recovery Plan.

The details of the forum are: 5:30 to 9pm, 4 March, O'Connell Centre (theatre), corner of Stuart Street and Blaxland Crescent, Griffith. To receive background material, and for catering purposes, please either e-mail marjo.rauhala@act.gov.au or phone 6207 2114 by 2 March 2004.

Conservation Council happenings

The Conservation Council for the South East Region and Canberra, of which FOG is a member, continues to make a proliferation of submissions and participate in many ACT government processes including biodiversity, natural resource management, water management, environment protection, transport, greenhouse, planning and the list goes on.

Recently, three issues have been somewhat dominant. Late last year the Council released a paper on banning cats in new suburbs which adjoin important reserves such as Mulligans Flat and Gooroo, where threatened bird species, Hooded Robins and Brown Tree Creepers are holding on.

ACT Government plans to proceed with the Gungahlin Drive Extension (GDE) are imminent, but the Council and Save the Ridge are gearing up to take whatever action they can to stop this. This is going to be a major battle over a huge area of grassland, woodland and dry forest with large biodiversity values.

Geoff Robertson, President of the Council, in addressing a public meeting organised by Save the Ridge said that he had been excited when the Labour Government had come to power in the ACT because they were committed to a fresh look at biodiversity, planning and transport. However, it had been a big disappointment, and despite overwhelming consultation had so far failed to deliver

In this issue

- News Roundup
- Terrific Tassie Tour
- Special feature on Bombala
- A local native garden
- Third native grasses conference continued
- Small Purple Pea (*Swainsona recta*) endangered

anything but old thinking which was disastrous for biodiversity (eg GDE, East O'Malley, Forde and Bonner), and provided poor planning and transport proposals. He also said Gungahlin residents, who like him are concerned about biodiversity, opposed GDE.

The other major issue is water where many are pressing for a new dam that will have major negative biodiversity outcomes.

Geoff has urged all who are conservation minded to support the Council and groups like Save the Ridge on these issues and to let the government know they are doing so. But these actions need to be taken now.

Post bushfire and drought recovery

CANBERRA. Dramatic displays of wildflowers have appeared in fire burnt natural areas of the ACT over the summer. There have been many reports of mass flowering of Prickly Starwort (*Stellaria pungens*), Diggers Speedwell (*Parahebe perfoliata*), and Trigger Plants (*Stylidium graminifolium*).

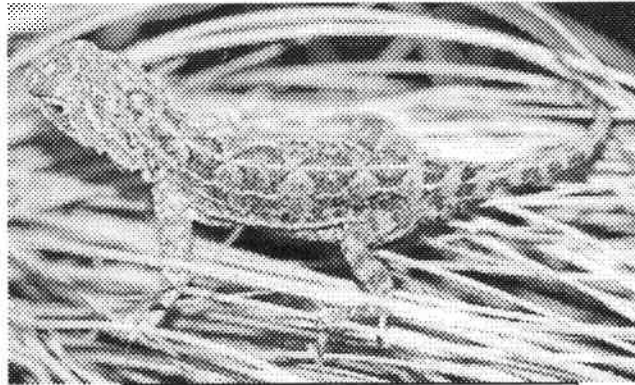
Native grasses continue to spread on roadsides and nature strips. Kangaroo Grass, several Wallaby Grass species, Short and Tall Spear Grasses, Windmill Grass, and Redleg Grass have had a prolific flowering. Australian Bindweed could also be seen claiming space on nature strips. Many areas, where Cape Weed was prolific in spring are now covered with Windmill or Wallaby Grasses. Several plants of Wild Sorghum were found on the Ngannawal Hill Reserve.

Many experts point to fire and drought opening up space (reducing competition) for plants which find the conditions to their liking and so proliferate.

GED and SLL on display

JANUARY Both the Grassland Earless Dragon and the Striped Legless Lizard, threatened grassland reptiles, delighted visitors to the at the ACT Herpetological Association (ACTHA) Display at the Australian National Botanic Gardens. There was a large range of reptiles and frogs, including many local species. Young crocodiles, blue tongues, goannas, diamond pythons, a death adder, long-necked turtles were all bit hits. Handling some of these animals is a big thrill for many and breaks down much prejudice. A slide show, produced by ACTHA and STEP, featured reptiles of

the Southern Tablelands. This was accompanied by several excellent lunchtime speakers, sessions on animal keeping, and a talk by Ian Fraser. 3000 people visited the display.



A Grassland Earless Dragon at the ACTHA Display. 3000 people visited display.

Threat to orchids

Grassland Reporter

Our last newsletter reported on FOG's visit to McPhersons Plain and one of the leaseholders and our host, Jim Kelton. Jim is doing an excellent job managing the biodiversity of the superb grassland on his lease on the Plain. He is also campaigning to have State Forests NSW (SFNSW) stop logging Compartments 117 and 118 of Bago State Forests which are areas of grassy woodland/forest with a diverse range of plant species.

Jim says "The areas proposed for logging contain a diverse range of species including rare and previously unknown species of orchids. Our forests are not only snow gum but include old growth candle bark, mountain gum, alpine ash and their associations - as such, there certainly is a threat posed to an array of species (and their habitats). However, it seems that the Threatened Species Licence provided to SFNSW by NPWS allows for the destruction of undescribed species."

Jim is particularly concerned with several undescribed orchid species in particular. One is a Bird Orchid, *Chiloglottis* aff. *Valida*, which he believes may have been wiped out by SFNSW in the area. The other two are Leek Orchids. He is making representations to the Forest Audit area of the Department of Environment and Conservation to bring his concerns to their attention.

Grassland recovery project

Natural Temperate Grasslands of the Southern Tablelands of NSW and the ACT have received a boost with the appointment of Rebecca Hall as project officer. While her appointment is only funded on an interim basis it is hoped that longer-term funding will emerge in the next few months.

She will work under the direction of the Natural Temperate Grassland Recovery Team which comprises scientists from Environment ACT and NSW Department of Environment and Conservation, as well as farmers and non-government groups such as the Monaro Conservation Management Network and FOG.

Key focus for the project will be surveying to establish a more comprehensive record of grassland sites, identifying further sites for reserves, monitoring management of sites, building up community awareness and involvement in grassland conservation, and expanding into ACT and strengthening grassland Conservation Management Networks.

In the short term the project will focus on establishing a range of methods to identify grassland sites and to monitor them, strengthening the scientific and community representation on the recovery team, and examining how to build greater stronger community links.

FOG will be examining ways to lend its support, such as training members to assist in various surveys to identify new grassland sites across the Southern Tablelands.

FOG President, Geoff Robertson, said that this phase of the project was very exciting as it set some great challenges in attempting to protect and recover our grassland ecosystems and might develop useful insights into ecosystem recovery. However, it would not be a radical departure from what was happening already and would retain the emphasis on off-reserve conservation.

The Recovery Team has been in existence for a number of years, and has many achievements. A few years back it produced a draft recovery plan which documented many of these accomplishments, but also pointed to the need to get a project officer in place to consolidate that work. The recovery plan is still a draft but will eventually come out for public comment.

CRC for Native Grasslands

4 FEBRUARY. John Boyd convened a meeting to discuss a possible application for a Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Native Grasslands. Seventeen people attended the meeting held at the CSIRO Division of Plant Industry in Canberra. John had developed the idea following some discussion at the Stipa-FOG conference in Cooma in November.

Discussion ranged over the issues to be faced in developing a CRC application, the appropriate geographic coverage and research scope, the range and level of industry support that might be attracted to such a CRC, and the steps to be taken to progress the development of an application.

The meeting agreed that there was definitely a case to be made for a CRC in this area, but it was not practical to proceed with an application in the current selection round. It was also agreed to continue to develop the network, and

look for ways in which collaborative projects might be developed in the shorter term, while looking to an application in the 2006 CRC selection round.

Anyone wishing to be kept informed of developments should contact John Boyd on 02 6453 7209, or e-mail jboyd@webone.com.au.

NSW Government reforms roll on

The big news is the so-called change in local government boundaries. In the Southern Tablelands the boundaries of three local governments were changed so much that they disappeared but there were no forced amalgamations!

Many complaints, some self-serving, were heard about the fact that three small (in terms of population) rural councils (Gunning, Mulwaree, and Yarrawlumla) disappeared. Many complaints were about process rather than the changes themselves. Some complaints mentioned that an opportunity to align catchments and local government

boundaries was missed. The remaining councils extended their territory.

Some of the old names remained (Cooma Monaro and Tumut), some had their names modified (Greater Queanbeyan City and Yass Valley), and some have new names (Eastern Capital City Region (Braidwood), Greater Argyle (Goulburn), and Upper Lachlan (Crookwell)).

One of the criticisms of many of the smaller councils was that they had been unable to carry out a range of new functions, especially related to planning and conservation.

These changes come hard on the heels of restructuring natural resource management within the NSW Government and the consolidation of Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs). While it is now clearer how the Government has been restructured, the functioning and people associated with the new CMAs and local governments will take some time to emerge.

Terrific Tassie Tour

Geoff Robertson

Fourteen mainland FOG members assembled at the Treasure Islands Caravan Park in Launceston on the evening of Tuesday 6 January 2004. There were the Rehinkels (four), the von Behrens, the Woods, the Russells, Cathy Robertson, Ian Anderson, Margaret Ning and I. Next morning we drove to Campbell Town (yes two words) in the Tasmanian midlands. There we were joined by Rosemary Verbeeten and Roy Skabo, members of Australian Plants Society Tasmania (Rosemary is now President of the Association of Societies for Growing Australian Plants), and also Michael Askey-Doran and Louise Giffedder, our leaders.

We arrived in Campbell Town in quite a storm and so the slowness to get our act together and get to the first site was of little consequence. Time was pleasantly spent in the bakery, "almost as good as the Nimmitabel Bakery", someone said. The storm did not auger well and was a constant threat on the Wednesday. However, once we left Campbell Town we had cold-but-fine weather, a little different to the heatwave we had been experiencing on the mainland.

Our next destination was Fosterville where we planned to stay the night (more on Fosterville later), but there was further delay as some of us had got left behind. Separation-from-the-group anxiety became a sub theme - we were very grateful to the mobile phone inventor. After unpacking, Louise and Michael provided a background briefing on grassy ecosystem conservation in Tassie.

Tunbridge Lagoon

The first site visited was Township Lagoon Nature Reserve at Tunbridge. The photo (cover page), while only black and white, provides a powerful image of the site with its rich natural temperate grassland on the basalt soil slopes and the salt

lake (one of four in Tasmania) at its base. At the top of the hill is Snow Gum (*Eucalyptus pauciflora*) woodland.

The group had lunch on the colourful grassland which we were told we should visit in spring to really see how spectacular it is. We wandered over the grassland, visited the woodland, and then toured around the lagoon, visiting grassland on the other side. Louise related the history and vegetation of the area, and during pauses, like what FOG folk do elsewhere, dropped to the ground to examine some intriguing and minute plants.

The Tunbridge Lagoon area (16ha) had been set aside for the expansion of the town of Tunbridge and remained unallocated crown land until the mid-1980s, when its conservation significance was recognised. It was proclaimed a nature reserve on Christmas Day 1991.

Five different floristic groups have been found at the site and 114 native plant species, including six endemic, four endangered, four vulnerable, and eight rare plant species. Louise provided us with a copy of the Zacharek et al article (see references) which contains a species list. One or two species were added during our visit.

Midlands grassy ecosystems

The reserve typified what was once the natural vegetation of the Midlands. "Natural grasslands and grassy woodlands were once extensive in the lowlands of the Midlands, but today the natural vegetation has been dramatically altered, with only thirteen per cent of the vegetation resembling the original remaining, and virtually all privately owned. The Midlands were arguably the birthplace of the agricultural and pastoral industries in Australia. In Tasmania, grasslands and grassy woodlands are the most threatened vegetation type, with 22 of the

37 communities described for Tasmania being unprotected in any national park or state reserve.

There is a high concentration of rare and threatened plant taxa in the Midlands, including many species that are not protected in any other state reserve.¹ The reserve has been recognised as an important grassland remnant." (Zacareket al).

The climate of the Tunbridge district is dry subhumid cool, characterised by a long warm season and peak rainfall in the spring and autumn.

One thing we learnt was that the Tasmanian vegetation legislation does not provide for threatened communities.

Long Paddock

Our next stop was the Long Paddock at Tunbridge not far from the lagoon. The so-called long paddock was a rather wide road verge that may have been used as a form of travelling stock route (not formalised in Tasmania). It was largely dominated by native grassland and even though this was summer there were many delightful grasses and forbs to see.

There was a roadside sign describing the importance of the site and so we all gathered around it to take a photo to remind ourselves that we need to make greater efforts to lobby for suitable signage back home.

We had expected, and we found, that many Tassie species which are shared with the mainland look somewhat different. None more so that the Snow Gum. Its leaves were very narrow and many specimens had weeping branches (see photo page 13). This was very intriguing and many a photo was taken to record these remarkable trees. Mainlanders concluded it looked very like our *Eucalyptus lacrimans*, rather than the mainland Snowgum. Another oddity in our view was Sweet Bursaria (*Bursaria spinosa*) which had a very thick trunk and looked like a small tree.

We stopped several times along the Long Paddock.

Tunbridge Tiers

The cavalcade then crossed over a mountain range (a Tier) looking for our next grassland site - this time a Poa site. Previously we have been viewing Kangaroo Grass sites.



Along the way we saw a lovely wooded area with an outstanding display of Trigger Plants (*Stylidium graminifolium*) and many other colourful plants. The groups spontaneously crawled through a fence and explored a delightful dry forest with a largely grassy, sometimes shrubby, understorey. We spotted some Sun and Bird Orchids about to flower.

We didn't find the Poa site.

Fosterville

Next we went to Henry Foster's. But before arriving there, we had to regroup after another separation.

"Fosterville is a family property and part of it is an original grant to my great-great-grandmother and her eldest son in 1823. Since 1823 the property has been added

to and now includes two adjoining properties, 'Merton Vale' and 'Bloomfield', and has a total of about 7,600 hectares," Henry told us, but we also read this in *The Nature of the Midlands* (see references).

Henry's story in the book makes very interesting reading. Trees are very scattered through his property and while he has tried to grow more, they have been hard to establish. He quotes a number of interesting natural events such as the big frost (three days at minus 10) in 1972 that killed every tree and shrub but not the grasses.

The native grassland paddocks we saw looked healthy and very species diverse. Henry has a mix of improved and native grass areas and believes that the native grasslands are highly suitable for some aspects of production. One of our delights was to see a ground hugging Blue Devil species, aptly named Prickfoot (*Eryngium vesiculosum*) which like many other forbs was prolific on Henry's land.

Then it was off to the deluxe shearing sheds for the night, again courtesy of Henry. This was excellent accommodation and the mob dug in to prepare the meal, enjoy it and wash up. I had volunteered to do the catering and found that I over estimated the numbers we would have for dinner and so we had too much of everything. (However, the surplus food disappeared by lunchtime on Thursday.) Then it was a great talk-



Photos, including cover page, by Michael Askey-Doran. Top: grassland above Tunbridge Lagoon. Bottom: still well rugged-up, road side sign in Long Paddock. Next page: Julian von Bibra, Rosemary von Behrens, Andy Russel and Louise Gilfedder.

¹ The reserve is an important locality for the glossy tussock lizard (*Pseudemoia pagenstecheri*), the isopod (*Haloniscus scarlet*), and a recently rediscovered moth (*Chrysolarentia decisaria*) and rare grasshopper (*Brachyoxema lobipennis*). The area is an important faunal refuge for rare invertebrates. Two crustaceans recorded from saline waters on mainland Australia have their only known Tasmanian occurrences at Township Lagoon. They are the isopod *Haloniscus scarlet* and the ostracod *Australocypris robusta*. The water fleas *Diacypsis* sp. and *Calamoecia clitellata* also occur at Township Lagoon.

fest, well up to the usual FOG standard followed by comfortable beds.

Next morning some of us snuck out, to avoid house tidying it was said, to look at some of the River Tussock (*Poa labillardieri*) grasslands on the river flats in Fosterville. Again, another type of grassland and plenty for us to see. Michael was in his natural element being the water guru for Tassie.

After packing up it was off to Ross and another bakery visit before our next site visit.

Beaufront

Beaufront is another of the big properties (size not given) on which an oral history is presented in the *Midlands* book. It has extensive native grasslands and woodlands. The other properties mentioned in *Midlands* are Bicton (10,000ac), Trefusis (17,000ac), Downward (1,450ac), Millford (4,500ac), Ferndale (1,254ac), and Middlepark (4,500ac).

Many of us admired the rose garden before being ushered into a lovely large and nicely renovated colonial home and treated to scores of scones and all the trimmings, not to mention other pastries. Those who already had taken morning tea at the bakery somehow forced themselves to partake.

Annabel and Julian von Bibra (and their children) were young and passionate devotees of Louise and Michael and told us of their many plans for practising conservation at Beaufront, pulling out various maps so that we could orient ourselves and comprehend the scale on which they were working.

After the vitals, it was decided that we would visit a grassy woodland - we had now seen a reasonable variety of grasslands. We drove a couple of kilometres across the property to arrive at one of Julian's favourite patches. This time there were many kids in tow who, despite their very young age, were extremely well informed and adventurous, pointing out all sorts of natural wonders. There was a new suite of plants to be seen, but my favourite was *Clematis gentianoides*.

My most delightful memories were watching Julian and Louise with the children sitting in the grasses and talking about the creepy crawlies.

While little grassy ecosystem remnants are in public hands, Louise, Michael and their colleagues have made great progress in making off-reserve conservation a reality in the Midlands. The *Midlands* book is not only informative and a great read, it is also a testament to her and others' wonderful achievements. (We have an extra copy if someone wants to purchase it).

North or south?

By this time many in the group had swapped around in the cars. Also any semblance of travelling in convoy seemed to have vanished as some needed to stop off to buy lunch, attend to personal matters etc. Being a follower in such situations (I didn't have a clue as to where I was), I thought that I was safe following Rainer who had Margaret and Cathy travelling with

him. I was alone in my car. Then Michael appeared travelling in the opposite direction. Good-bye Rainer et al.

Most of us arrived at the Conara meeting place at various times. But after a while, it was clear that Rainer et al had followed another plan. Later it was revealed that when they reached the Midland Highway they unanimously agreed to turn south (although no one consulted a compass). Arriving in the northern suburbs of Hobart (maybe not quite) they u-turned. Mobile phones again saved the day.

Conara Roadside Park

After lunch we were able to explore the small Conara Roadside Park. The concept was to plant local species, particularly of threatened plants, to showcase the local ecosystems. Maybe with my STEP hat on, I could learn something here. The original concept, landscape design, and display boards were good, and it was certainly an interesting site and there were plenty of plants to see and enjoy. However, the area was a little wild and unkempt (grassy ecosystem remnants are usually a little less messy), the gardens had not been properly maintained, and several fires, probably deliberately lit, in the reserve had not helped. Needs a little more TLC.

Tom Gibson Nature Reserve

The final stop was the Tom Gibson Nature Reserve that was a mix of grassland, woodland and forest. We stopped at several spots in the rather large reserve. Louise related how it had come to be created more by good luck than design - very fortunate. It was about 4pm Thursday that

we departed company with different groups travelling in different directions.

A potted summary

While I thought that I would see something like the ecosystems of the Southern Tablelands of NSW, especially as there are many plants in common, the landscapes and vegetation patterns of the Midlands on the whole were different but very delightful. The land ownership and approach to conservation were also somewhat unanticipated but again inspiring and demonstrate what might be achieved when large landowners work with expert ecologists to achieve good outcomes. It was also great to be on tour with some fun-loving islanders. A very big thanks to Louise and Michael who gave so generously of their time before and during the trip, and to Henry Foster and the von Bibra family for sharing their world and hospitality with us. Rosemary Verbeeten has since informed me that her Australian Plants group has arranged a further visit to these properties in spring.

References:

Andrew Zacharek, L. Gilfedder, and S. Harris, *The flora of Township Lagoon Nature Reserve and its management, Tunbridge, Tasmania*, published in the *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania, Volume 131*, 1997.

Louise Gilfedder, Jamie Kilpatrick, Annie Wapstra, Hans Wapstar, Jo Dean, *The Nature of the Midlands*, Midlands Bushweb, Northern Midlands Council, 2003.



Special feature on Bombala

A pine in the neck

Groundcover

For some time now many people have been coming to FOG to complain about pine forests being planted in areas of natural temperate grassland and grassy woodland in the southern Monaro.

FOG has held a number of activities in the Southern Monaro around the towns of Bombala and Delegate and has undertaken a number of surveys there, especially in travelling stock reserves. Members are well aware of the beauty and large areas of natural temperate grassland, snow gum woodland and its various vegetation associations, and dry forest remnants.

Pine forests are becoming an extensive feature. Personally the writer does not like pine landscapes, especially as our natural landscapes are much more appealing and provide a better biodiversity function. However, not all land can be used for biodiversity.

Many people question the sustainability of pine plantations, including their long-term economic return, impacts on water usage, source as pine wildings, and possible fire risk. Many farmers consider they are being squeezed out because Willmott can offer higher land prices.

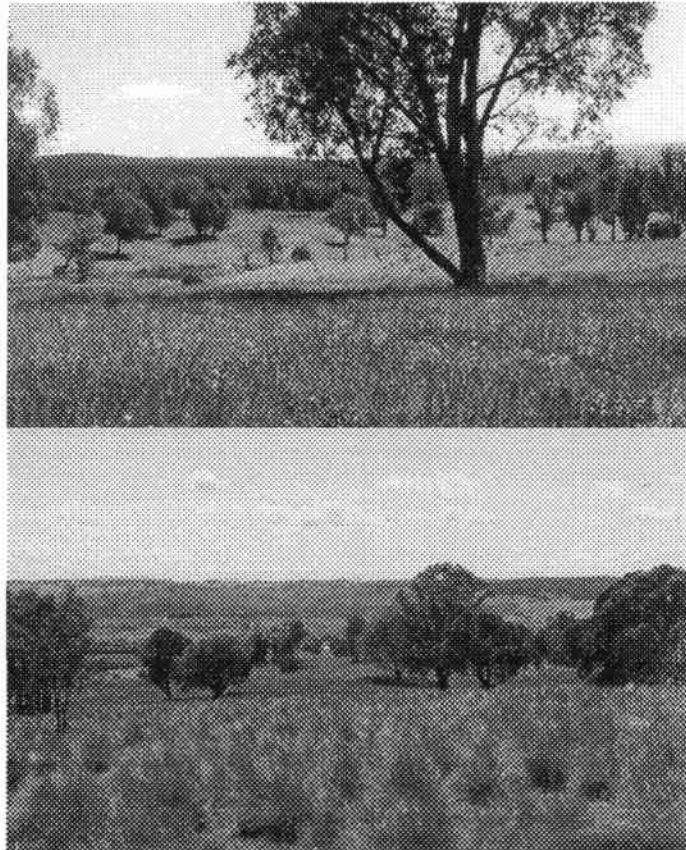
Under the clever heading of "a pine in the neck," *the Land* (5 Feb 2004) states that farmers in the Bombala region are under siege from pine plantations because a Melbourne-based company is turning prime farmland into forests. It quotes farmers as saying that state and commonwealth laws are helping the pine takeover.

Jule Craig has helped put the following material together. Ian Paterson (*the Land* 5 Feb 2004) provides the broader rural picture.

FOG's primary concern is with the loss of our biodiversity, especially of grassy ecosystems sites which have no special protection under NSW legislation.

While such sites may be compatible with grazing, they will not survive if planted to pine.

The time is well overdue for the NSW Government to list natural temperate grassland and snow gum woodland as threatened ecological communities to protect such remnant areas from pine



Photos showing variety of grassy ecosystem communities at "Craigie" with the Craigie Range in background. These illustrate the landscapes and ecosystems under threat from pine plantations. Photos by Jule Craig.

plantations, and to review the *Plantations and Reafforestation Act* that permits destruction of remnant vegetation.

Plantations squeeze out farmland
Ian Paterson, The Land 5 Feb 2004

It was only a year ago that Melbourne-based Willmott Forests was a knight in shining armour for the southern Monaro region.

It was revitalising the timber industry, had bought the defunct Bombala softwood mill and promised to upgrade and reopen it, and had moved into a new regional headquarters in the old Delegate hospital.

But the honeymoon now appears to be over as farmers find themselves sur-

rounded by pine plantations instead of neighbours, Bombala Shire Council is cut out of the planning process and the power of the State Government to enforce its own planning laws is being questioned.

Some disgruntled locals are accusing Willmott - a publicly listed company which manages pine plantations for investors - of dividing and dislocating communities, flouting planning regulations, destroying native vegetation, exposing residents to a vastly increased fire risk and planting pines on unsuitable land.

At the same time they concede the system within which Willmott operates - put in place by the Federal and State Governments - is as much to blame for their disquiet as is the company and its pine trees.

Bombala's Mayor, Fay Campbell, said better regional planning, including by shire councils and the Rural Fire Service, would benefit all parties.

Pines are nothing new in the region but these days, largely because of native vegetation legislation, foresters are forced to target prime farmland with improved pastures and few trees - exactly the sort of land favoured by farmers.

The momentum grew with the Federal Government's "Plantations 2020 Vision", a strategy launched in 1997 offering tax breaks and other incentives to treble the area planted to trees and cut timber imports.

As a bonus, the NSW Government's Reafforestation Act of 1999 cut through red tape, taking plantations approvals and controls away from local councils and handing them to the Sydney-based Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources (DIPNR).

The result: two vastly different industries competing for the same land, with one Willmott - accused of outbidding farmers for prime grazing land because of its unfair advantage gained from tax

breaks and a ready supply of investor cash.

Willmott denies this, saying only four of 18 primary production tax relief provisions apply to the company's operations.

"Farmers get to average their income over several years, which seems like a pretty good advantage," said the company's senior executive officer, David Smith.

"They're basing their land purchase prices on their own enterprise and we're basing our prices on our business - but there are plenty of properties we've missed out on."

Nonetheless, Willmott's bids have helped push up land values, increasing returns for those selling up or retiring and boosting equity for those staying (but also hiking their shire rates and making it more difficult to expand).

After 23 years in the area, Willmott has 16,000 hectares under pines and, including its interest in local timber processor, Prime Pine, employs 120 people in Bombala and Delegate.

It refutes allegations its development applications ignore natural and Aboriginal heritage requirements and misrepresent vegetation types and land zoning. It also claims its plantations are designed to minimise fire risk and says it plays its part in bushfire fighting, having spent \$300,000 fighting last summer's horror blazes without losing a single pine.

According to its prospectus, the company targets land with an average rainfall of 700 millimetres or more and aims for an average annual growth of 25 cubic metres of timber a hectare.

But an independent assessment carried out for John Auer, managing director of Snowy River Seeds at Orbost, Victoria, and a holder in the rugged Deddick Valley just across the border from Delegate, claims production is little more than half this.

And research by CSIRO Land and Water scientist, Professor Rob Vertessy, suggests each hectare of pines could cut annual run-off to streams by up to two megalitres.

"Future plantings would reduce the yield of water into the Snowy River by about six per cent, which makes a laughing stock of the four per cent put back into the Snowy last year for environmental flows," Mr Auer said, noting that no environmental impact study had been done on this issue.

The southern Monaro's pine plantations cover 40,000ha and Willmott plans to add a further 14,000ha in the next six to 10 years.

Pines close in at Delegate *The Land 5 Feb 2004.*

GIVEN the explosive role pine trees played in last year's Canberra's fire storm, some Delegate landholders are terrified the district's expanding pine plantations pose a huge fire risk.

Glenn Perkins, "Bimbimbie", Corrowong, says pines will be planted to within 20 metres of a neighbour's fence and 50 metres from his home.

The plantation will be on the north-west side of the of the house - the bushfire side - and the neighbour is so concerned that he marked the "pine line" with rocks.

"The council said if the pine forest had been there first he wouldn't have been allowed to build there because of the bushfire risk," said Mr Perkins.'

He said pine plantations were welcome as long as forestry and agriculture could coexist.

"We want a plan put in place where all the issues are taken into account before the trees are planted," he said.

FOG member's view *Jule and Norman Craig*

We consider ourselves to be most fortunate since a whole new world has been opened up to us having been made aware of our significant grasslands and the importance of them and their ongoing management.

The vegetation is much more diverse than we ever imagined when we purchased the property twelve years ago. Apart from our natural grasslands, botanists have pointed out grasses and orchids in our forest comprising forty acres.

The property is pretty, rolling countryside with scattered trees, Snow Gum, Broad-leaf Peppermint (*Eucalyptus dives*) and sadly only one old Candlebark (*E. rubida*). The forest is mainly Broad-leaf Peppermint and Ribbon Gum (*E. viminalis*). There are some 'improved' pastures leading down to a permanent river where there are platypus and we hope that they remain a healthy population!

As we run cattle we have fenced off remnant vegetation and have fenced and planted corridors from the river to the

bush. We have a good selection of bird life and an interesting migrant population in autumn and spring. It is always a thrill to observe the wildlife, such as echidnas, trundling about their business. And what could be more beautiful than grassy swards of Golden Sun Moth Orchids to name only one?

This property is typical of many in the southern Monaro and it's so upsetting to see trees and grasslands habitat being bulldozed on a vast scale for softwood plantations under the encouragement of both State and Federal Governments. Whenever anyone questions the 'wisdom' of this we are referred to the *Plantation and Reforestation Act 1999* which was passed to fast track the softwood industry.

It seems all we can do for the environment is to manage our trees and grasses and control noxious weeds.

Submissions to NSW Government *Groundcover*

Jule has been busy lobbying the NSW Government. In her letter to the Premier, Bob Carr, she raised several important issues.

She stated that given various tax incentives, Willmott are effectively subsidised, giving them an unfair competitive advantage against farmers. She also queries whether there are plans by State Forests to harvest pine forests that were bought from Kapunda when it went broke.

She pointed to the loss of grassland and wildlife corridors, which counters the work undertaken by Landcare and World Wide Fund for Nature.

She mentions water usage and the fact that some gullies appear to be no longer running. She also sites run off of chemicals as a problem.

She mentions that tourism will be affected because the landscapes are no longer appealing.

She also mentions the social cost to the community.

The response prepared by DIPNR (9 Jan. 2004) does not attempt to address these many concerns but nevertheless provides some useful information.

The NSW Government has initiated a scoping study and review of State Forests softwood and hardwood plantation operations, although it seems unlikely that this review will examine biodiversity issues.

Examining plantations and their effects on the environment is handled by officers from DIPNR, under the *Plantations and Re-afforestations Act 1999*, and "stringent environmental assessment methods" are used. Unfortunately, as many people have pointed out to FOG, because Natural Temperate Grassland of the Southern Tablelands are only listed under Commonwealth legislation and not NSW legislation, their being an endangered ecological community is ignored. The value of woodlands is also ignored.

The NSW Government is currently evaluating a proposal to develop a de-

tailed landscape plan for the South East region.

FOG will be writing to the government to obtain more information on these issues.

Corrowong Valley

One area of great concern is the Corrowong Valley which is threatened by future planting. It contains a 40ha heritage site of volcanic pipes that have specific invertebrates that only frequent these sites.

The birds that have been recorded there include several threatened and declining species such as the Emu, Hooded Robin,

Speckled Warbler, Brown Tree-creeper, Diamond Firetail, Regent Honey-eater, Barking Owl, Rufous Whistler, Dusky Woodswallow, Restless Flycatcher, and Scarlet and Flame Robin.

The plant list is not so impressive, only 63 species so far, but no doubt more are there to be found. Some remnants of Box woodland, an endangered ecological community in NSW, are also present there.

A Local Native Garden!

Alan Ford

Regular readers will be familiar with Alan's many contributions to the newsletter, but in recent years he has also turned his hand to a horticultural slant and he is establishing a native grassland garden. Many FOG members show similar proclivities. Let us hear from you. Unfortunately the photos Alan supplied were taken some months ago and do not show the luxuriant growth that has since taken place in his Kangaroo, Poa and Wallaby Grasses.

I decided some time ago to see whether a native plant garden would be possible - a local native plant garden from local seed sources. After getting rid of trees, in spite of the Government (Liberal and Labor) wanting to keep the pine tree (presumably on the basis that they don't burn) I was able to plan roughly what might be possible, but it was to take some time before the garden began to emerge.

After searching around for ideas I decided that the tree mulch (from the pines) would be spread over most of the front yard and that the garden would be a grassland garden with shrubs around the edge. I decided to try a Themeda-Poa base for a start and so far that is working. I added a group of daisies at

the same time and they appear to be thriving. Since February 2003 I have a planted *Austrodanthonia* along with another daisy and a lily and I am now waiting to see what happens next!

The drought had affected the shrubs that I was hoping to plant and I am going to have to wait until autumn before two out of the three are ready. I have probably forgotten something that I

have ordered, but I am just going to take it as it comes.

There are several considerations with a native garden that has a local content concept as its driving force. You have to be patient for the plants to be grown in the first place, you have to be ready to accept a certain loss rate, particularly in times of drought, and you have to wait until things start to happen. You also have to be prepared to do some very active weeding to give the natives a real chance of thriving.

At the moment things are still very small and I think it will be next summer before these plants show what can be achieved.

My thanks to Gwyn Clarke and Leon Horsnell for making it happen.



Third Native Grasses Conference, Part II

The last issue of the Newsletter brought several pages of reports on the Stipa and Friends of Grasslands Third Native Grasses Conference. Peter Austin, the Land journalist, attended the conference and subsequently printed many column inches in the Land. Most articles appearing in the Land were signed by him, although some were not. While Peter's material reflects the culture of his paper and possibly he could have said more about what grassy conservationists are trying to achieve (maybe we need to put across clearer messages), his articles were very positive. He fairly reported on the achievement of farmers working successfully with native grasses in production and combining production and conservation. Insufficient space in this newsletter has meant that some of the Land material is held for future issues.

Peppercorn comment

Peter Austin

The following appeared in the Land on 25 December in Peter Austin's Peppercorn Comment column under the heading Communication not conflict at native grass forum.

WHATEVER else comes out of the State Government's new approach to native vegetation management, it's hoped the end result is a shift away from legislative solutions in favour of shared ownership of decision-making.

An important outcome of the new approach should be a rebuilding of bridges between landholders and government agency staff - bridges which have been comprehensively demolished (or at best, reduced to a strand of fraying rope) by the Carr Government's regulatory excesses.

When landholders are squeezed out of business by impractical regulations and harassed by officers whose job it is to enforce those regulations, it's easy for them to lose sight that within the various agencies whose logos they have come to dread, are a lot of dedicated, intelligent and well-intentioned people.

An example of this utopian state of affairs was provided a couple of weeks ago at the National Native Grass Conference held over three days in Cooma which I was fortunate enough to attend.

There, as at previous conferences, farmers, agency specialists, academics, senior bureaucrats, conservationists (as op-

posed to "environmentalists") and others manage to get along and exchange views and information without any hint of conflict or confrontation.

At the native grasses conference, in contrast to the back-room deliberations of the bureaucrats who draft our laws, nobody pretends that they have all the answers. There is a shared acknowledgment that we are still learning about how best to manage our natural environment and that there is no room for dogma.

An interesting theme to emerge from the conference was the differing expectations that people can have from the same piece of farmland, depending on their prime motivation.

Landowners no longer necessarily want to use every inch of their property to maximise production.

They are happier in many cases to manage some of the land for product and some for conservation and to derive equal satisfaction from measuring progress on either front.

As one speaker from Greening Australia put it, farmers should rejoice at the discovery that a threatened species of animal or plant life is thriving on their land and regard it as an endorsement of their management approach.

Merry Christmas to all Peppercorn readers and a happy and hopefully, prosperous (and wetter) new year.

Use veg areas, improve or lock up? Peter Austin, the Land 11 Dec. 2003

LANDHOLDERS - and for that matter, the community - have two broad options for managing native vegetation for conservation and biodiversity.

Either they can identify areas of low productive value and high conservation value and set them aside as virtual on-farm reserves, or they can harness them for production by adopting low-intensity grazing and cropping systems.

The question is usually not that black and white, of course: there are some areas of native vegetation that will never be suited to profitable production, while other areas have been so modified with superphosphate and seeding treatment over the years that they barely qualify as native vegetation.

Again, management approaches to native vegetation can vary from district to district and are heavily influenced by such factors as property size, financial demands and access to off-farm income.

But the basic debate about native vegetation (leaving aside the regulatory issues) is whether to use it, "improve" it or lock it up - and if production is to be compromised in the process, who should pay?

All sides of the debate were comprehensively aired at the third national Native Grasses Conference held over three days at Cooma and involving 250 land users, scientists, bureaucrats and conservationists from all over Australia.

Organised jointly by the Stipa Native Grasses Association and Friends of Grasslands (the former a production-focused organisation and the latter a conservation group), the conference's theme was "sustainability and beyond".

Delegates heard from some farmers who were successfully implementing management strategies that combined conservation of native grasses with profitable and sustainable grazing production.

Others were using native grasses as a nil-soil-disturbance base for annual cropping programs, while others again were reintroducing native grasses to tired cropping paddocks to rebuild depleted soils and stimulate microbial activity. The value of native grasses during the drought was highlighted by several speakers who noted these grasses' persistence under tough conditions compared with introduced species, and their capacity to respond to relatively small rainfall. But delegates also heard that native grass conservation was not without cost and could be beyond the means of many farmers.

Such was certainly the case in the Monaro, according to Kerry Pfeiffer, a former NSW Farmers Association general councillor who is now vice-chairman of the South East Catchment Management Board.

He told the conference the Monaro had been relatively debt-free up until the early 1980s but subsequent droughts and low prices had seen most farms build up debt to the point where maximising returns was now the overriding priority.

Continued on page 12.

Small Purple Pea (*Swainsona recta*) Endangered

Michael Bedingfield

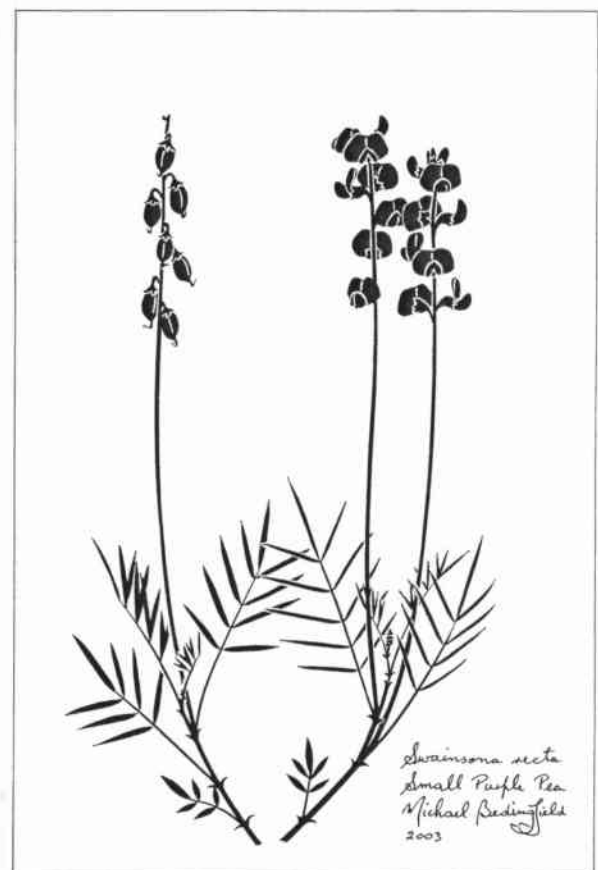
The Small Purple Pea is a member of the large *Swainsona* genus which includes a variety of pea plants such as the striking Sturt's Desert Pea (*S. formosa* - South Australia's floral emblem). *Swainsona recta* is endangered, and occurs in small numbers in just a few places in the ACT and NSW. In the past it was relatively numerous and widespread in inland areas of south-east NSW and Victoria. But now it is estimated there are fewer than 4000 plants left. The largest population is in a rail reserve south of Canberra. With such a small number left, some care is required to ensure their continued existence. The plant has been declared Endangered in ACT and NSW, and Environment ACT has an Action Plan in place for its maintenance and monitoring. This Action Plan has been incorporated into the new Woodlands Strategy. The plant naturally occurs in open woodland and its decline is related to the decline of our woodlands.

The plant is perennial and regrowth occurs from the dormant rootstock during the cooler months before the spring flowering in about October. The leaf of the *Swainsona recta* is "pinnate", which means it is a compound leaf having a number of smaller leaflets on each side of a central stem. There are 5-13 very narrow leaflets, each with a pointed apex. The leaves are not hairy and the terminal leaflet is somewhat longer than the others. The flowers are purple or purplish-pink, and occur in "racemes", ie loosely occurring along an erect stem. The fruit is a rounded-oblong shaped pod. (Please refer to the drawings. The whole plant is shown at half size, with the flowers, fruit and a leaf shown separately at normal size.) The plant is said to respond well after fire.

There are only four *Swainsona* species which occur locally, and there is a degree of concern for the future of most of them. The others are the Notched Swainson-pea (*S. monticola*), Silky Swainson-pea (*S. sericea*), and Behr's Swainson-pea (*S. behriana*).

The Notched Swainson-pea is the one most similar to the Small Purple Pea. It has its flowers in racemes too, but can be distinguished by the leaves. The leaflets of the pinnate leaves are generally wider and have a blunt tip, with the tip usually notched.

The Silky Swainson-pea and Behr's Swainson-pea are very similar to each other and can be differentiated only by a close examination of the hairs on the leaves. However they are easily distinguished from the Small Purple Pea, because their flowers occur in "umbels", that is in a close grouping at the top of the flower stem. Also their leaves are shorter and wider and are covered in tiny hairs. (Behr's Swainson-pea is shown in the drawings at half size.)



The Notched Swainson-pea and the Silky Swainson-pea are mentioned in the Woodlands Strategy as well, where they are described as "uncommon". They are rare enough that their populations will be carefully monitored.

The genus name for the *Swainsona recta* is after Isaac Swainson (1746-1812), a scientist and horticulturalist from England; "recta" comes from the Latin for "upright", referring to the erect growing habit of the plant.

When visiting a Canberra site for the *S. recta* I felt rather privileged to do so. They seemed rather elegant, in their small way, sprouting up among the ashes of last years fires, and keeping their noble erect attitude despite the threat to their future.

Swainsona recta, an exceptionally rare purple pea, requiring a lot of TLC to ensure it has a brighter future.

Third Native Grasses Conference, Part II

cont from page 10.

This was corroborated by local consultant agronomist, Stuart Burge, who said his recent survey of graziers revealed almost all of the 40 respondents cited "leaving land in better condition" as their priority farming goal, but all cited finance as the limiting factor. In other words, nobody was questioning the ecological value of native grasses or the desirability of their conservation but the message was that farmers managing land thus for "ecosystem services" should not bear the cost alone.

Delegates heard of a number of initiatives now underway to help landholders recognise and better manage native vegetation on their farms, in contrast to the regulatory approach adopted so controversially by the NSW Government.

Mr Pfeiffer outlined a pilot scheme by the South East Catchment Management Board as part of the Snowy Monaro Biodiversity Conservation Strategy.

Designed to create voluntary partnerships that together ensure the retention, management and conservation of Monaro native grasslands, the strategy is bringing together landholders, government, industry and researchers.

A pilot scheme involving 67 landholders across the three Monaro shires and backed by a four-year funding budget of \$2.2 million from State and federal programs hopes to establish a model which, in time, can be applied across the region.

It offers a mix of components, from targeted research and extension to property mapping, weed control strategies and financial incentives for protection of areas of high conservation value.

A Native Vegetation and Biodiversity program is being conducted by Land, Water and Wool, a joint venture of Australian Wool Innovation and Land and Water Australia.

It is funding four regional projects across eastern Australia (a fifth is

planned) to analyse a range of production systems and identify those management approaches that meet profitability needs while also delivering environmental outcomes.

Delegates at Cooma heard one case study from the Northern Tablelands project in NSW involving Mary and Richard Maclean, who introduced "planned grazing" on their 508-hectare Armidale property, "Woodville East", three years ago.

The shift from set stocking to a grazing system based on high-density grazing for short periods has already enabled the Macleans to stimulate the growth of the more palatable native species at the expense of less desirable species and weeds.

Soil moisture increased, resulting in green feed from native perennials at the height of the drought and even nutrition made possible by the regular shifts to fresh, high quality pasture have seen wool tensile strength lifted by 10-15 Newtons/kilotex.

Yet another voluntary support mechanism for sustaining native grass ecosystems is the Conservation Management Network (CMN) Concept formed during the past five years as a "club" to link isolated grassland remnants and their managers.

There are now four CMNs and more are planned to help owners and managers of land protect and manage valued sites, identify potential new "gap filling" sites and restore degraded areas into new sites.

At last count there were 176 sites encompassed by the four CMNs involving 7131 hectares and 645 owners. Of the NSW sites, 50 are within the Monaro, 36 in the Southern Tablelands, and 61 within the Grassy Box Woodlands.

'Stop kidding yourselves'

ANYBODY who says profitability and sustainable farming can be practiced without disturbing the natural ecosystem is "kidding themselves", according to a member of one of the Monaro's most successful pastoral families, Richard Taylor.

He told delegates to the Cooma Native Grasses Conference that in higher-rainfall areas like the Monaro, at least, the intensive land use necessary to underpin profitable farm production was simply not compatible with ecosystem preservation.

This meant environmental outcomes needed to be pursued on land less suited to high-intensity grazing and the cost of managing such land shared by the wider community. Mr Taylor, whose "Bellevue" property near Nimmitabel is one of several in the district owned by a Taylor family partnership running about 40,000 sheep and 2500 cattle, said woolgrowers could only remain viable by continually lifting productivity.

"In 1990 we were cutting 550 bales of 21 micron wool," he said. "Those same paddocks now cut 850 bales of 19 micron wool."

"If we were still producing what we were in 1990, we wouldn't have a viable business."

But he said the productivity gains were largely achieved on the better-type country able to support well fertilised improved pastures and this country was effectively subsidising the less productive country whose upkeep was increasingly marginal.

Mr Taylor said taxpayer funds now going into Landcare projects that should arguably be the responsibility of individual landowners could perhaps be better used to help achieve conservation

outcomes on land unfit for sustainable intensive production.

Perennials sustain stud

FATHER and son, George and Chad Taylor, never wanted for green pick even during the worst of the drought on their "Pine Park" property at Wuuluman, near Wellington.

The Taylors are proof positive that native grass conservation and profitable grazing need not be mutually exclusive objectives but as George told the Cooma conference, judicious management and patience are the keys to success.

Home of the Mumblebone Merino stud, the Taylors' properties, totalling about 5000 hectares, have been managed for native grass proliferation since annual supering was abandoned in the early 1990s.

Their country, like most in the slopes and tablelands, had been exposed to the 'super phosphate and sub-clover' treat-

ment since the 1960s, resulting in a runaway growth of clover and winter, annuals which out-competed the valuable summer-growing native perennial grasses.

Realising that their existing system was unsustainable, George and his brother and then partner, Bruce, embarked on a new, low-input management approach using grazing to foster the growth and spread of desirable native perennial grasses.

It's a policy that has been maintained since the division of the family property in 2001 by George and Chad, with spectacular success.

The previous mix of annual pasture plants and weeds has been replaced by a native perennial grass community that provides 100 per cent ground cover and year-round feed.

Fertiliser is used on the Taylors' country now only occasionally.

Most of the nutrients are supplied by the increased microbial activity in the soil.

The key to the sustainability of the system is conservative stocking (about 3.75 dry sheep equivalents per hectare) but this is offset by reduced input costs and greater drought preparedness: the Taylors have not hand-fed for 35 years.

George Taylor believes native grasses have been under-rated by many graziers because they tend to be judged by the less palatable species that are often the first to re-establish in an eaten-out paddock.

He said species such as red grass were an important component of the system, as they help to aerate the soil, enabling other more desirable grasses to establish if managed with intensive, strategically-timed grazing.

Some last pictures of the Tassie trip

Again, some photos by Michael that I couldn't resist. Below, it is getting a little late but Louise, Rainer, Betty and Cathy are engrossed in some important point. RHS, we can clearly see several conversations: Ian and Andy, Roy and Rainer, and Dierk and Louise discussing this Snow Gum. Note its narrow leaves. Rosemary von Behrens in foreground is well covered up and hides me (Geoff) from view.



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Do you want to subscribe to the newsletter? It comes out six times a year, and you can obtain it by joining FOG. 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 or parkcare group, or actively interested in grassland and woodland conservation or revegetation, we hope we have something to offer you. We may assist by visiting 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 and woodlands, plant identification skills, 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.

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If you would like any further information about membership please contact Kim Pullen or 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.