

# News of Friends of Grasslands

Supporting native grassy ecosystems

July - August 2008

ISSN 1832-6315

## Program

**SAT 28 JUNE 10.30am Meeting of FOG Cultivation and Conservation Group** to discuss future directions (see news item page 2). For more information contact Janet on 6251 8949 or at [janet.russell@fog.org.au](mailto:janet.russell@fog.org.au).

**THURS 3 JULY 8pm & SAT 5 JULY 1.45pm Dennis Dyer will speak (Thurs) and lead a walk (Sat) on geology of the ACT.** These are joint Field Naturalists/FOG activities. Thurs - Gould Wing (Building 116) of the Botany and Zoology (BOZO) Dept at the ANU. Sat - meet at the Canberra Environment and Sustainability Resource Centre car park, corner of Lennox Crossing and Lawson Crescent. For further details contact Tony Lawson on 6161 9430 or [tony.lawson@fog.org.au](mailto:tony.lawson@fog.org.au).

**SAT 26 JULY 1.30 to 4.15pm What FOG members have been doing.** This year at our winter slide afternoon, we have three fascinating talks on large mammals and grasslands, alpine ecosystems, and northern hairy nose wombat. Location is Mugga Mugga Education Centre, Narrabundah Lane, Symonston ACT, just opposite the Therapeutic Goods Administration Centre. Afternoon tea provided. No charge. More information - see page 2.

**SAT 30 AUGUST 1 to 5pm Workshop: The grassland gospel according to FOG** - enhancing knowledge of and on-ground skills in grassy ecosystems. Please come and make this workshop a success. Location is Mugga Mugga Education Centre, Narrabundah Lane, Symonston ACT, just opposite the Therapeutic Goods Administration Centre. Afternoon tea provided. No charge but please let us know if you are coming by registering with Sarah 6251 2228 or [sarah.hnatiuk@fog.org.au](mailto:sarah.hnatiuk@fog.org.au). For more information see news item, *FOG gospel workshop* on page 2.

**15-16 JULY Murrumbidgee CMA Showcasing Aboriginal Cultural values on private land day** at Garuwanga near Nimmitabel, Margaret Ning's and Geoff Robertson's property. Themes are: connecting local landholders and Aboriginal people, mutual learning/exploring of Traditional knowledge, and practical ways to protect and manage biodiversity and cultural values. Speakers include Rod Mason, Geoffrey Simpson, Rainer Rehwinkel, Margaret and Geoff. Places are available to FOG members. For more information, contact Geoff, details back page.

### In this issue

Program  
News roundup  
FOG advocacy  
Letter to FOG  
Cultivation corner  
Monitoring cattle grazing at Scottsdale  
Brogo visit - South Coast Grassy Forests  
Grass triggerplant - a trigger happy flower



Images of FOG-FSCCMN Brogo visit. Story page 8

## *News Roundup*

### **Alpine vegetation, roos, dingoes & wombats.**

**SAT 26 JULY** This year our winter slide afternoon includes three excellent and informative presentations by FOG members.

*Kangaroos, dingoes and temperate grasslands.* Two grassland animals, now much maligned, are dingoes and kangaroos. Recent research has improved our understanding of the ecology of kangaroos in temperate grasslands, and their relationship with dingoes, and this has important implications for grassland management. Don Fletcher has studied the interaction of these animals in Namadgi National Park, and will talk to FOG about weather, pasture, kangaroos and dingoes, in the ACT region.

*Saving alpine ecosystems in the face of climate change.* Joe McAuliffe, is part of a team from the Australian National Botanic Gardens, who is identifying plants in each of the alpine vegetation types, and collecting seeds and plant material as a safeguard against climate change. Joe will talk about this work and also explore whether similar approaches can be taken to other threatened ecosystems such as grasslands and woodlands. Joe will also be leading a FOG activity to see these alpine vegetation types in January 2009.

*Wombat watching.* In the Nov-Dec 2007 FOG Newsletter, Kay and Leon Pietsch gave readers a fascinating account of their month as volunteer caretakers looking after northern hairy nose wombats. Their talk will show slides of their work and discoveries. For details of time and location, see cover page.

### **FOG gospel workshop**

*Geoff Robertson*

Following the *FOG future directions workshop* (25 August 2007),

the FOG committee has been exploring ways to make FOG more effective and to share the responsibility around. At the AGM in February, FOG adopted its strategic plan (draft published in Jan-Feb newsletter), and more recently FOG has formed an advocacy group which held a successful advocacy workshop (24 May) - see page 3.

To address some other areas of activity, FOG recently formed an on-ground and extension group, and part of its effort has been devoted to designing a workshop (for time and venue - see cover page) to articulate what are FOG's key messages, to consider what resources we have and need, and to explore how we may enhance members skills in both extension and on-ground work. Rhian Williams, former editor of *Rural Fringe* and new FOG member, suggested the workshop title - *the grassland gospel according to FOG* - and assisted to articulate its aims and content.

The workshop aims to help FOG members to learn and understand FOG's key messages about grasslands and how to confidently communicate those messages. The workshop also aims to assist members to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to help others in managing their grassy ecosystems.

The workshop will explore the science behind conserving grassy ecosystems, the resources we have to promote the conservation of grassy ecosystems, the resources and education packages we need to develop to support our work, how we can best target the wider community, including schools with the message of grassland conservation, and how to lead a FOG walk or other on-ground activity.

We hope that many members will participate - it should be a great opportunity to learn about many practical aspects of conservation and to provide future direction to FOG.

### **FOG C&C Group**

*Janet Russell*

The FOG Cultivation and Conservation Group has met six times this year. This has been largely to members' gardens and one trip to Bungendore to view a garden which has been designed and landscaped as part of a commercial complex. No two gardens have been the same and it takes time to develop the gardens into what we would like them to be with some heady successes but also some challenges. The drought has taken its toll on some of the plantings, and there can be difficulties in growing plants that live in different micro-climates from the ones that our gardens provide, whatever the weather.

Ingrid Adler has agreed to conduct a workshop to show us how to propagate plants by division, and there is another garden visit planned for November this year. We are also planning to meet on Saturday 28 June at 10.30am to discuss what the group would like to be doing next year.

If you have ideas that you would like to contribute, or you are interested in coming, or would just like further information, please contact Janet Russell - see program on covering page.

### **FOG's new president**

At the last committee meeting, Geoff Robertson was elected as FOG's president. While the committee welcomes Geoff back into this job, and Geoff is certainly familiar with what needs to be done, the committee is concerned that neither of the vice president positions is filled, and a heavy workload falls on Geoff and Bernadette (as secretary). So, this is an appeal to those who may have a little time to spare, to think about joining the committee and becoming more active in FOG. Talk to Geoff or Bernadette, contact details back page.

**STOP PRESS:** Isobel Crawford has agreed and been accepted as a FOG vice President. Welcome Isobel.



### FOG advocacy workshop

24 MAY Thirteen people attended the FOG workshop *seeking to influence—community advocacy* which met its aim to review what FOG is doing in its advocacy role and how it might strengthen it.

Trish Harrup, who has just given up the job of the Director of the Conservation Council Canberra Region, spoke on the theory and practice of advocacy, especially the role of the Conservation Council. It was a fascinating talk which summed up the dos and don'ts.

David Shorthouse, spoke on the Limestone Plains Group's (LPG) recent experience in trying to get good outcomes for Canberra's grasslands, and emphasized the role of getting scientists on board. Again another fascinating talk.

Trish (left) and David are seen in the photo with Isobel Crawford who with David are co-conveners of the LPG.

Bernadette O'Leary then talked on what FOG had been doing of late, and it was again a well researched, interesting and challenging talk.

The participants then broke into two groups, one to discuss the lessons learnt from FOG's involvement in the Molongo campaign (see second photo) and what approach FOG should take in ensuring that the new ACT Nature Conservation Act gets it right. Naarilla Hirsch is documenting the workshop for anyone interested, and will present a longer report in the next newsletter.

### PTWL declared vulnerable

13 APRIL ACT Chief Minister, Jon Stanhope, declared the pink-tail worm lizard (PTWL) (*Aprasia parapulchella*) as a vulnerable species in the ACT, its stronghold. It has been recorded in significant but



discrete populations at Mount Taylor and along the Molonglo and Murrumbidgee River corridors. The lizard is declared vulnerable under NSW, Victorian and Commonwealth legislation.

Mr Stanhope said that this requires the Conservator of Flora and Fauna to develop an Action Plan for the species. He noted the connection in relation to the Molonglo Valley.

FOG is particularly pleased with this outcome as Paul Cheesman, on behalf of FOG, and Geoff Robertson, on behalf of the ACT Herpetological Association, nominated PWTL for listing, following extensive research into the ecology and status of the lizard.

### Golden Sun Moth

FOG, with the Institute of Applied Ecology at the University of Canberra as a partner, has applied for a Threatened Species Network Community Grant of \$14,150 to fund a Golden Sun Moth (GSM) monitoring project. The project proposes to employ Anett Richter, a FOG member and expert on butterfly/moth conservation and monitoring, on a part-time basis to oversee the project design and implementation. The project will develop standardised monitoring protocols for use by community groups and professionals. After evaluation, the protocols will be applied at 24 GSM habitat sites in the ACT, to establish a baseline for monitoring and to underpin sound guidelines for site management.

FOG will be seeking volunteers for around 500 hours, in both habitat assessment and monitoring. Volunteers will attend moth identification and monitoring training workshops, and count moths over spring and summer. FOG will promote the project and progress on its website, and publicise what can be done to protect the habitat of this grassland flagship species.

This is an exciting potential project for FOG and will illustrate, hopefully, what committed volunteers can do to advance grassland and related species conservation. The project will also involve other FOG members and scientists Will Osborne and Kim Pullen. The outcome of the application should be known in June.

FOG especially thanks Anett and Will, who approached FOG and drafted the proposal, and Bernadette O'Leary who assisted in finalising the application. The project is supported by the ACT Government.

### Molonglo brochure Geoff Robertson

While the ACT Government's moratorium on the Central Molonglo development is a good win, there is much more to do. Please read the included Conservation Council brochure, take the suggested actions and volunteer to help on this campaign.

### **Corroboree frog news**

30 JUNE ACT Stateline reported that Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve had successfully bred the northern corroboree frog in captivity. A total of around 180 eggs were produced across the ten breeding enclosures, with most of them fertile. This was their first attempt at breeding, and with what they have learnt this year the future looks promising.

The team responsible for the breeding has been collecting tadpole eggs from the wild and hatching and raising frogs in captivity. Concern was growing following the fact that few eggs were found in the wild in recent years. There was also a waiting period because these frogs only breed after around four years. Now that the first breeding event has occurred, consideration will be given to releasing frogs into their former habitat. Corroboree frogs have faced a severe decline in numbers in the wild in recent years, following the spread of chytrid fungus combined with drought and loss of habitat through the 2003 Canberra Fire.

### **Symposium issues**

11 MAY the National Parks Association (NPA) ACT symposium, *Corridors for Survival in Changing World*, on 9-10 May received a large write up by Nyssa Skilton in the Sunday Canberra Times. The symposium drew together researchers and land managers to address the threats of climate change on flora and fauna. Attendees heard how species and ecosystems could disappear quite suddenly.

According to NPA president, Christine Goonrey, urgent action is needed to stop ACT parks and reserves changing beyond recognition. 'There is a really genuine emerging crisis,' Ms Goonrey said. Chief Minister, Jon Stanhope, who opened the conference, said that we have an obligation to future generations to act, creating escape routes or conservation zones.

Kosciuszko National Park's Phil Zylstra challenged assumptions backing prescribed burns in forests, saying forest managers could inadvertently be making forests more flammable in some areas. It is necessary to discriminate between different forests when prescribing burns. 'If we have a knee-jerk reaction, we could go out and start haphazardly burning country without necessarily having any benefit and in a worst-case scenario, actually causing more fires in some areas,' he said.

Namadgi National Park district manager, Brett McNamara, said fire was an incredibly complex science, which needed more research. 'Fire is a necessary tool within the land manager's kit bag, and we need to see fire as part of a process of managing the natural environment,' he said. Conducting larger numbers of prescribed burns might appease the public in the short term, but it might not be beneficial in the long term, Mr McNamara said.

PhD student, Anett Richter, who is studying the impact of drought on beetles, has discovered the number of beetles has shrunk over about 15 years as rainfall levels decrease. 'They are very important food sources and therefore it's not only about invertebrates, it's about the whole ecosystem,' she said. The severity of the problem is hard to determine, because drought is a common pattern in Australia. 'We expect that species are adapted to it, but we haven't had so many weather extremes in the past.' Her study has not yet identified which beetles are disappearing, but it is focusing on the numbers as 'reptiles do not care what the name of the beetle is'. Anett has studied beetles in 24 ACT sites, including urban areas and nature reserves.

### **Kangaroo cull at Lawson Grasscover**

As most readers now know, the kangaroo cull at Lawson has been completed with almost 500 kangaroos euthanized then shot, leaving 100 which will be the subject of fertility

controls. This created much controversy in the Canberra community and beyond. As one friend messaged to a radio broadcast, 'this is a sad affair but necessary. Much has been done to sensationalise the matter which has not been helpful. It is time to move on.'

At the time of the last issue, it appeared that the Australian Government would dart, capture and translocate the kangaroos. For many reasons this was not a viable option, not only in the ACT but on other Defence managed lands, and the Government, after organised lobbying by the Limestone Plains Group, came to accept this and authorised the cull. The large numbers of kangaroos around the Majura Field Firing Range have yet to be addressed, as does the issue of trying to rehabilitate the grasslands and habitat for threatened species at Lawson and Majura.

### **Small grants for birds**

Grants of up to \$2,000 are available from the Canberra Birds Conservation Fund (CBCF) for research, conservation and related projects. CBCF has been established to support the Canberra Ornithologists Group's (COG's) environmental objects by receiving and disbursing tax deductible donations. COG's environmental objects are 'to promote the conservation of native birds and their habitats', with particular reference to the native birds and their habitats in the Canberra region.

The specific environmental objectives of the Fund are to encourage interest in, and develop knowledge of, the birds of the Canberra region, to promote and co-ordinate the study of birds, and to promote the conservation of native birds and their habitats. The Fund welcomes applications from individuals and organisations for grants to support projects that will contribute to achieving its environmental objectives. For further information, contact the Fund's convener, David McDonald telephone: (02) 6238 3706 or email: [conservation.fund@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:conservation.fund@canberrabirds.org.au).

## Mugga vegetation

Andy Russell

4 APRIL On a fine and sunny day, Geoff Robertson and I met Sophie Chessell (Education Officer) and Jane Hamilton (Educator) at Mugga Mugga to view the grasses and herbage at the site. Sophie and Jane are keen to know the names of the plants at Mugga to bring an extra dimension to their educational activity. We listed the following native grasses, red grass



Geoff, Sophie and Andy at Mugga

(*Bothriochloa macra*), hairy panic (*Panicum effusum*), wallaby grass (*Austrodanthonia* sp.), wheatgrass (*Elymus scaber*), barbed wire grass (*Cymbopogon refractus*), and nine awn grass (*Enneapogon nigricans*), and native forbs, matt rush (*Lomandra* sp.), common everlasting (*Chrysocephalum apiculatum*), blue bell (*Wahlenbergia* sp.), Australian bindweed (*Convolvulus erubescens*), and sheep's burr (*Acaena ovina*). Introduced plants and weeds included African love grass (*Eragrostis curvula*), Paspalum (*Paspalum dilatatum*) and skeleton weed (*Chondrilla juncea*).

## C&W Stakeholders Forum

Geoff Robertson

8 APRIL Representing FOG, I attended the first meeting of the Conservation and Wildlife Stakeholders Forum which is one of many forums being organised by ACT Parks, Conservation and Land Structures. Russell Watkinson (Director), Neil Cooper (Fire Management) Stephen Hughes

(Parks and Reserves) and Sharon Lane (Research and Planning) represented the agency - Sharon has recently been confirmed as head of R&P. Also represented were the Conservation Council, the Limestone Plains Group, the Canberra Ornithologists Group, and the National Parks Association.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss how the agency and the various groups represented might hold a regular discussion on issues of mutual interest. In turn each

person present raised a number of issues of concern and some useful exchanges took place. I had a long list of issues that FOG has been pursuing with the agency. I spoke to some of them and tabled the list. The forum

would not replace meetings with individual groups but may provide a broader context for them.

A second meeting was held on 15 May and it focused on the recent ACT Budget. The meeting also provided an opportunity to find out more about the location of pink tail worm lizard habitat and plans for the new Nature Conservation Act. If anyone would like a copy of the minutes please contact me.

## Veg survey at Molongo

3 MAY about ten FOG members turned out to survey vegetation in areas threatened by the proposed Central Molongo development. This was organised by Michael Mulvaney. Thanks Michael et al.

## Caravan park secure

11 MAY The Canberra Times ran a news item saying that the Long Stay Caravan Park had secured its site. FOG had lobbied hard against this outcome. Chalk up one for development and minus one for the grassland earless dragon.

## K2C Open Day a big success

12 APRIL the Kosciuszko to Coast (K2C) open day at Ingelara was a big success and the hugh downpour of rain at day's end was also very welcomed.

About 350 people turned up for the inaugural K2C Open Day. The objective of the day was to promote the different ways landholders could contribute to restoring the landscape and establish a conservation corridor between Kosciuszko National Park and the coastal forests of the south coast. The event was launched by the NSW Environment Minister, Verity



Firth, seen with Steve Whan and FOG members, Lauren van Dyke (K2C Facilitator), Geoff Robertson and David Eddy.

Many FOG members were among the crowd, and woodland and grassland tours were led by Rainer Rehwinkel and David. These were very popular. Geoff gave two presentations on grasses of the Canberra region and one presentation on the region's reptiles. Photo by Stuart Cohen (DECC).

## Australasian Plant Conservation

There are some good grassy article in the Mar-May issue. One in particular I comment on is Paul Gibson Roy's article on his experiments in re-establishing grasslands. - Ed.

## FOG on-ground and extension

FOG has established an on-ground and extension group to see how it can be more effective in these areas, and in education. If interested contact Geoff Robertson (contact details back page).



## Visit to Jojare

Janet Russell

Jean Smith and Bob Small, owners of Jojare near Berridale, are recently joined FOG members. Andy and I spent the Easter Weekend with Jean and Bob at their Berridale home. We also had an introduction to their delightful property. When they first bought it and they did a proper inspection, they were worried as there seemed so little vegetation. However, this was not the case by the time we saw it. It is sclerophyll forest, very stony with a creek which borders the property. There was very little weed generally although typically there were grassy open patches where they were concentrated, but Bob and Jean have identified the weeds and are systematically dealing with them.

We needed to have a eucalyptus expert there to document them, but we identified the acacias as silver wattle and blackwood (*A. dealbata* and *A. melanoxylon*). The main larger shrubs were shiny cassinia (*Cassinia longifolia*), and a small patch of gorse bitter pea (*Daviesia ulicifolia*) near the creek. Some of the many grasses we identified were wire grass (*Aristida*), spear grasses (*Austrostipa*), barbed wire grass (*Cymbopogon*), wallaby grasses (*Austrodanthonia*), red leg grass (*Bothriochloa macra*), kangaroo grass (*Themeda australis*), wheat grass (*Elymus scaber*) and red-anther wallaby grass (*Joycea pallida*). We identified about 50 different genera of plants altogether, and the small shrubs and forbs made up the rest. It will be an absolute pleasure to be there in spring to see them flowering.

## New Parkcare Group

1 MARCH the new Park Care Group for Tuggeranong Hill and the Conder Wetlands (ACT) held its first meeting. 39 people attended. Many were interested in the *My Patch* notion. For further information about future activities contact: Cath Blunt 6291 1827.

## FOG advocacy

Bernadette O'Leary

I've included summary information on recent advocacy below. Copies of submissions and related letters are available on the FOG website at [www.fog.org.au](http://www.fog.org.au).

### April

FOG provided information, further to its submission to the ACT Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment's (CSE) **grassland management inquiry** in January, on request by the Office of the Commissioner. Matters included a proposed conservation overlay in the Territory Plan, and improvements to legislation, to protect native vegetation in general, and threatened communities/species.

### May

FOG wrote to the **Prime Minister** regarding its continuing concerns about threats to conservation of significant remnants of lowland native grassland because of lack of action in managing kangaroos on Department of Defence land in Canberra, including in context of the ACT CSE's inquiry (see above).

EPBC Act (Cth) related.

- FOG provided comments on referral 2008/4170, a proposal for **taxiway extension at the Canberra International Airport**. Issues included: FOG's long term interest in (and frustration about) conservation of the endangered natural temperate grassland community and related threatened species in the Majura Valley, including at the Airport site; failure to recognise past loss/degradation of natural values and to avoid further loss/degradation; and insufficient evidence of proposed mitigation.
- FOG provided comments on referral 2008/4175, a proposal to develop **Crace**, in Gungahlin. Issues included: need to protect a remnant of the endangered box gum woodland community and avoid threats to adjacent areas of

endangered natural temperate grassland community and the vulnerable striped legless lizard; an opportunity to contribute to woodland landscape character (through landscape planting); proposed offsetting and restoration; responding to unexpected regeneration; need to specify adequate mitigation, both on-site and affecting the adjoining Gungahlin Nature Reserve; and encouraging wildlife movement.

FOG also made a submission on the Preliminary Assessment for upgrading the ACT portion of the **Kings Highway**. Issues included: inadequate ecological assessment (e.g. overemphasis on trees, and failure to identify native vegetation impacts comprehensively); questions re adequacy of proposed rehabilitation; likely difference in approach between NSW/ACT segments re offsetting the loss of native vegetation; need to specify adequate mitigation proposed; and progressive destruction of the recognised and valued 'Bush Capital' landscape.

### Workshop

FOG ran an advocacy workshop for members and others on Saturday 24 May. See page 3. A full report will be provided to participants, and further information in next newsletter.

## Letter to FOG

### ANBG loss of funding

Sandra Hand

I have joined the Australian Native Plants Society (ANPS) recently and read the Editorial in the latest publication about the Australian National Botanical Gardens' loss of funding - I thought we should put something in the FOG newsletter. The last para in their editorial says, 'Canberra Region has placed material about this issue (funding) that you can use to tell the politicians what you want the ANBG to be - a research and education oriented institution - not a glorified park, at <http://asgap.org.au/anbg.html>. Just a thought, I guess most people would be aware of this but I certainly was not.

## Cultivation Corner:

More daisies- Janet Russell

May heralds the beginning of the correa, grevillea and banksia season but we are fortunate also to have a lovely flowering of golden everlasting (*Xerochrysum bracteatum*). These flowers are the result of seed that I broadcast along the edge of an east-facing flower bed.

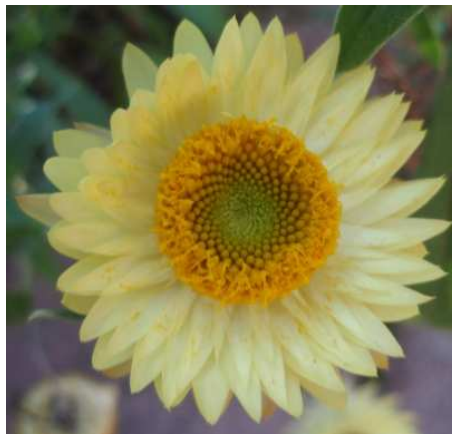


When we get rain, this area gets a little extra moisture because it is next to the courtyard. Their germination resulted in a bank of plants that started flowering in summer and have not stopped putting on a show since. The good thing about this time of the year, is that the cool weather stops them dashing to seed and they are a welcome splash of colour.

I broadcast the seeds in spring. I had saved them over the previous summer allowing them to dry in paper bags. As daisy seed generally does not remain viable for very long, I sowed all the seed I had. The seeds came from a number of named forms of xerochrysum, such as White Cockatoo or Princess of Wales, and some first-generation plants from these varieties which had self-sown. They nearly always have germinated on the edge of gardens adjacent to hard surfaces. Nature may give you some freebies, but it sets its own parameters. Now we enjoy waiting to see what form and colour the flowers will be and appre-

ciate the variety which the more random process of sowing seeds brings.

The sticky everlasting (*Xerochrysum viscosum*) daisies are also flowering and their deep green foliage with



Various forms of golden everlasting daisy.

golden flower heads are very attractive. I have also grown these plants from seed although not directly into the soil. I grew them as a result of the workshop which Warren Saunders conducted for FOG members in

January last year. We took away with us a polystyrene box of Warren's seed-raising mixture with the seeds sowed that we had collected with him prior to the workshop. I placed the box into a plastic tub in which I kept a small amount of water until I put the plants out in late winter. Most of what germinated was *Ammobium alatum* along with a few *X. viscosum*.

We have quite a number of ammobium in the front garden and they survived with no watering. Not all of them flowered but the plants are still there looking perfectly healthy so they are amazingly hardy. There is a healthy debate in the Cultivation group about their value as garden plants. I am happy to have them but I do know in well-watered gardens, they have a tendency to be weedy.

The other daisy which is doing quite well is *Leucochrysum albicans*. I am very fond of this daisy but the results of our first attempt at growing them were abysmal. They seem happier now at the front facing west and I first tried them in a bed mulched with gravel which was going to be The Daisy Garden. The daisies I planted had other ideas. We have three reasonably robust plants of *L. albicans* now, one being the yellow form and the other white and one other pathetic white specimen which managed to raise a flower-head or two this year. All the other daisies failed. We have two self-sown *L. albicans*, one at the bottom of the drive growing in a crack in the cement and the other in the gravel bed. The other ones we planted are scattered round the garden and seem to thrive on no water whatsoever, except what nature delivers.

My aim is to increase the number of daisies in the garden, looking to natural successors to those that succumb. I do not want an extensive propagation program as we go away too often so I am looking at sowing in situ. I have yet to discover whether this is an attainable goal.



## **Brogo Visit - South Coast Grassy Forests**

*Dan Williamson*

On 19 April FOG teamed up with the Far South Coast CMN. The FSCCMN facilitators, Dan and Vicki Williamson organised their end and did some excellent catering. Dan prepared a report which I have adapted slightly below. Three FOG members' properties were visited, namely those of Bernadette O'Leary and Richard Bomford, Jackie Miles and Max Campbell, and John and Alice Buckley. More information about FSCCMN (and this trip) may be found on the excellent website [www.fsccmn.com.au](http://www.fsccmn.com.au). FOG would like to thank Dan and Vicki for arranging their end, and to our property owner hosts –Ed.

19 APRIL Over 30 people gathered in Brogo for a field day on management of native grassy woodlands. The CMN organised the day because of the growing interest in recognising and managing native grassy woodlands. Often grassy woodlands go unrecognised as native vegetation because they don't fit the usual picture of 'bush' and tend to look like an unkempt semi-cleared paddock. As a result, many owners don't realise they have native vegetation on their property.

The CMN teamed up with Canberra based group, Friends of Grasslands, who came down to get firsthand experience of more coastal grassy ecosystems. Their knowledge of grassland management and ID skills were great to have along.

Starting at Brogo the group looked at how fire had been used to halt wattle regeneration from overcoming a native grassy paddock and discussed other threats such as blady grass and bracken - strangely enough both of which are native to the area. The group then moved onto Springvale (just out of Bega) where it focussed more on a range of grassy species. This was the network's first community event held at a private property in Kameruka. The attraction was a walk through a small remnant of the endangered vegetation community Lowland Grassy Woodland. The valley's very own expert botanist Jackie Miles led the walk. Jackie's specialty is native plants and she helped the landholders identify many of the indicator species that make up this vegetation collection.

Lowland Grassy Woodland (previously known as Candelo and Bega Dry Grass Forest) is predominantly grassland with widely spaced eucalypts and some shrubs. Before European settlement this was how many of the rolling hills and coastal river valleys looked – which must have been very appealing to graziers. Unfortunately, much of what remains is not protected in national parks or reserve systems; private landholders hold the majority. As a result, 'Lowland Grassy Woodland in the South East Corner Bioregion' is listed as an Endangered Ecological Community under the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*.



The purpose of this walk was to give people a chance to see the array of different native grasses and herbs in this vegetation type. Lowland Grassy Woodland has a high diversity of native grasses and herbs in the groundcover, and generally features forest red gums and rough-barked apple gums.

Those who went along were able to bring cuttings of unknown plants from their own property for Jackie to identify. Most were pleasantly surprised when their suspected weed turned out in fact to be a native!

Some images are included on the FSCCMN website. Many of the plants were identified on the walk. Most are indicator species for Candelo Dry Grass Forest.



Above: Jackie Miles talking fire management. Below: Bernadette talking about her patch. Photos by Margaret Ning. More trip photos by Dan Williamson are on cover page.



## ***Monitoring Cattle Grazing at Scottsdale***

*Peter Saunders*

Scottsdale is a 1328 ha property on the Monaro owned by Bush Heritage Australia (BHA). It has been divided into four Conservation Precincts (CP) based broadly on vegetation type and geology. One of these (CPC) consists of five sub areas based on existing paddock boundaries and forms the main valley floor running north west from the Monaro Highway to the Murrumbidgee River. This area is largely open grassland with a history of intensive agricultural practices which has included cropping.

The south-east area of CPC (CPC1) has been exposed to the most intensive agricultural operations that were undertaken on Scottsdale and is now an open grassland dominated by African love grass (ALG). CPC1 paddock boundary and names are shown in Figure 1.

During the two years before the BHA purchase, this area of Scottsdale was lightly grazed by sheep which had access to most of the property. Consequently an unpalatable and dense thatch of ALG developed which resulted in little, if any, grazing. Since January 2007 this area has been grazed by cattle through agistment that I manage and is overseen by the Reserve Manager Owen Whittaker. I have established a cell grazing and reticulated drinking water system with appropriate yards. This monitoring program has been established in order to correlate any effects of the present management practices with changing grassland composition, particularly that of ALG.

The aims of this monitoring program are to: assess and record changes in ALG population densities, assess and record changes in other flora population densities, operate for the period of agistment in the area identified as CPC1, and enable comparison with climate and grazing records for the same period

In establishing the methodology, consideration was given to survey methods already in use at Scottsdale and in the Monaro area. Specifically transect (step and point) and quadrant (utilising Braun-Blanquet) methods were considered. In addition to meeting the aims of the program and in order to facilitate the program's long term survival, it was considered important that the program was not overly arduous or resource intensive. After significant engagement of interested stakeholders representing BHA, NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC), ACT Parks Conservation and Lands, Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Authority (MCMA), Monaro Grassland Conservation Management Network (MGCMN) and Friends of Grasslands (FOG), a duplicate 50 meter point transect method was decided upon.

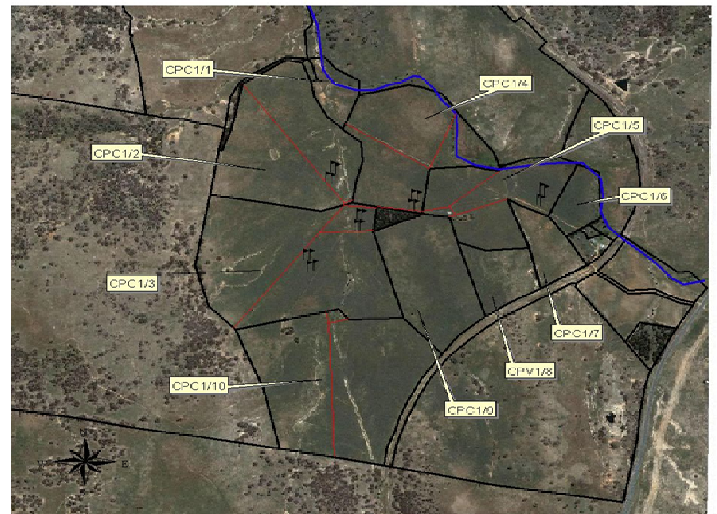


Figure 1 – CPC1 paddock boundaries and names

Figure 2 – CPC1 monitoring points

Photograph 1 – Initial briefing and first transect

Five monitoring sites within CPC1 were selected and two transects established at each site as detailed at Figure 2. Two of the sites are located within the smaller grazing cells that undergo higher grazing pressures than the larger grazing cells, where a further two sites were selected. The fifth site was located in a central grazing exclusion area.

On selecting the site it was marked by a steel picket, labelled with a cattle ear tag and a waypoint logged with a GPS. A second picket was placed and logged 50 meters to the north of this picket, forming the first 50m transect. The second transect was then marked and logged parallel to and 20m to the west of this first transect.

Having formed the transect pair, a 50m tape was laid out along each one and held taut as close as practicable to ground level. An assessment was then made as to the dominant ground cover for points at 1 meter intervals from 1 to 50, moving from south to north along each transect. Results were recorded on a monitoring sheet. The results recorded at each point were bare, litter or a specific plant species, the latter assessment being based on foliage cover rather than basal or inflorescence areas and necessitated a degree of subjective assessment. The average percentage occurrence of each species, litter or bare ground was then calculated by averaging their occurrence from both transects. As can be seen in Photograph 1 the first transect was conducted as a group in order to ensure a consistent approach to data collection.

Finally, a digital photograph of each transect from south to north was taken.

It is intended to maintain the existing monitoring sites and repeat the point transect monitoring, as detailed here, in spring and autumn of each year. It is also intended to approach FOG to assist in providing resources to assist with each survey. If resources allow, the first 20m of each transect will be used to establish a 20m by 20m quadrat survey which will be surveyed to establish total site biodiversity, with the intent to repeat this survey on a four yearly cycle.

Detailed grazing notes for each cell in terms of date and grazing pressure as a measure of standard animal units per hectare are maintained separately by me. Rainfall is recorded monthly on reserve returns to ABH with Bureau of Meteorology records contributing to detail of the broader weather patterns.

The first survey was completed on 17 March 2008 with the capable and invaluable assistance of FOG members Geoff Robertson, Margaret Ning, Adam Muyt, Anne l'Ons, Kate Godman, Sarah Hnatiuk and the Monaro Grassland Conservation Management Network coordinator, David Eddy. The average results for both transects at each monitoring point are summarized at Table 1, with the associated field notes held on file by me. There is a photographic record for each site.

### Discussion and Conclusion

The monitoring procedure proved simple to both teach and undertake, with the whole site being surveyed within three hours. The procedure is felt to have met the four aims of the monitoring program as far as practicable at this early stage of the program. The procedure will be subject to errors from variations in surveyor technique and the subjective nature in assessing the appropriate plant to record at each point. This is hoped to be minimised by the simplicity of the procedure and consistency of survey methods.

Given the very early stage of this monitoring program and the significant impact seasonal conditions may have had, it is not intended to interpret the results to any great extent. To that extent full climatic and grazing records have not been integrated into this report. However it is worth noting that Site 3 had considerable differences in ground cover due to the additional intervention of glyphosphate spraying of serrated tussock in the area. There is also a possible correlation between grazing pressure and litter, with the exclusion area having the lowest litter count and highest ALG count.

It is intended to repeat the process in spring 2008, requesting the assistance of FOG, and investigate a possible quadrat survey to assess all species present.

17 March 08 results	Site 1 CPC1/3S	Site 2 Excl Area	Site 3 CPC1/2N	Site 4 CPC1/4S	Site 5 CPC1/5E
% ALG	82	93	48	84	78
% Litter	6	3	28	11	10
% Bare	1	0	5	1	1
% Other species	11	4	19	4	11
Dominant other species – if any	skeleton wd, saffron & scotch thistle	bind weed wood sorrel	wild sage plus 5 species at 2% each	saffron thistle	6 species at approx 2% each
Grazing and pressure SAU/ha	53 days at an average of 3.8 SAU/ha	zero grazing	40 days at an average of 5.8 SAU/ha	30 days at an average of 7.7 SAU/ha	37 days at an average of 8.7 SAU/ha



## Grass triggerplant – with a trigger-happy flower

Michael Beddingfield

The grass triggerplant is a wonder of the creativity within the plant world. The base of this perennial herb is a grass-like tuft of leaves which are up to 25 cm long. In spring new flower-heads grow from within this tuft, with the flowers growing along the erect stems which have no branches and can be up to 70 cm tall.

The clever aspect of the plant is in the design of the flowers. They are pink, and have four petals which open as opposite pairs at the top of a short tube. The “trigger” is called a *gynostemium*, which is an angled structure in which male and female flower parts have been fused, with the ovary at the base. It is reddish in colour and has a small “cushion” at the tip. This trigger is held poised or “cocked” at the side of the flower tube. If an insect alights on the flower it springs upward so that the cushion is then held over the centre of the flower. The movement is quite sudden and occasionally knocks the stunned insect to the ground. Remarkably, the trigger later resumes its original position and can repeat the same action again. When the flower is young, the gynostemium plays the male role and can give the insect a dusting of pollen, which it can take to the next flower. As the flower matures, the tip is transformed to take the female role, and grows a cover of small hairs. These are able to pick up pollen off an insect which has landed on the flower. Thus, cross pollination is very possible, maintaining the genetic diversity of the species. After the petals wither, the base of the flower grows into an ovoid shaped fruit, containing the seeds for the next generation.

The grass triggerplant is known botanically as *Stylidium graminifolium*. It is widespread and common in the region, in relatively undisturbed grassy habitats. It occurs in all states except WA and NT and is the most widespread triggerplant species. *Stylidium* is a predominantly Australian genus with about 130 species in Australia, and over 90 species are endemic to WA. The only other *Stylidium* species that occurs in the ACT is *S. aff. inundatum*. This is quite small, rarely more than five cm high and grows in damp locations.

The boxed drawing shows the whole of the grass triggerplant at one fifth normal size, with a branch at half size. The flowers and fruit are shown separately at full size. In the ACT, the pink flowers growing on erect stems above the grassy tuft are easy to recognise, and are a pleasant sight when you come across this marvel of botanical ingenuity.



**Address:** Friends of Grasslands Inc., PO Box 987, Civic Square ACT 2608, **Or:** correspondence@fog.org.au

**Web:** www.fog.org.au

**Web manager:** webmanager@fog.org.au

**General enquiries:** Geoff (02 6241 4065), Janet (02 6251 8949), or info@fog.org.au.

**Activities** (to enquire about, register for, or suggest): Janet (02 6251 8949) or activities@fog.org.au

**Membership & n'sletter despatch:** membership@fog.org.au

**Newsletter editor:** newsletter@fog.org.au

**E-bulletin editor:** ebuletin@fog.org.au

**Committee matters:** committee@fog.org.au

**Advocacy:** advocacy@fog.org.au

#### **Committee**

**President:** geoff.robertson@fog.org.au

**Vice presidents:** isobel.crawford@fog.org.au, and vacant

**Secretary:** bernadette.oleary@fog.org.au

**Treasurer:** sandra.hand@fog.org.au

**Imm. Past Pres.** kim.pullen@fog.org.au

**Committee:** david.eddy@fog.org.au

sarah.hnatiuk@fog.org.au

stephen.horn@fog.org.au

tony.lawson@fog.org.au

margaret.ning@fog.org.au

janet.russell@fog.org.au, and

benjamin.whitworth@fog.org.au

**Public officer:** andrew.russell@fog.org.au

---

## *Friends of Grasslands newsletter*

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.

If you are already a member, why not encourage friends to join, or make a gift of membership to someone else? We will also send a 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 Janet Russell or Geoff Robertson. Contact details are given in the boxes above. For newsletter and e-bulletin matters contact Geoff Robertson or Tony Lawson, respectively. We look forward to hearing from you.

---

*Friends of Grasslands Inc*  
*PO Box 987*  
*Civic Square ACT 2608*