



News of Friends of Grasslands

Supporting native grassy ecosystems

January-February 2011

ISSN 1832-6315

Program Jan-Feb 2011

SAT 29 NOV, 9.30am-4pm, **Visit to Mount Oak with Margaret Ning.** See page 2.

SAT 19 FEB, 1pm-5pm, **Visit to ACT regenerating bushland, and Afternoon tea and talk on Containerised seed production.** See page 2.

Rescheduled FOG events

Indigenous values workshop The first of a series of workshops was postponed. Two workshops are now planned for autumn (details are still to be finalized). These workshops provide an exciting way to learn about Ngarigo traditional knowledge and to gain insights into biodiversity and sustainable agricultural practice. More information on page 2.

Tomneys Plain and the Tops, near Tumburrumba. This was scheduled for 10-11 December but due to weather had to be postponed. These plant surveys may be re-scheduled but not until at least late February. If you are interested contact Margaret Ning on 02 6241 4065 or Margaret.ning@fog.org.au.

ACTHA events of interest to FOG

MON-SUN 17-23 JAN **Snakes Alive** at the Australian National Botanic Gardens (ANBG), 10am-4pm weekdays and 10am-6pm weekend. More info page on 2.

A photographic workshop is planned for 12 to 13 February at Garuwanga, a property near Nimmitabel. The workshop will cover zoom to macro photography, with Geoffrey Dabb and Graham Stephinson imparting their considerable photography skills to attendees.

Numbers will be limited to 20 people and a small charge of \$5 will go into an 'operating fund'. Plenty of accommodation (indoors on mattresses, or BYO tent outside) is available on site, but it will be BYO food. Inquiries: margaretning@iprimus.com.au or 02 6241 4065.

It is membership renewal time

A membership renewal form for 2011 is enclosed, if you have not already renewed. Please complete it carefully. You may pay by cheque, money order or EFT. Annual rates are only \$20 for families/individuals, \$5 for students/concessions, and \$50 for organisations. Donations, while not tax deductible, are very welcome. The form is also on our website (www.fog.org.au). For any queries contact Margaret on 02 6241 4065 or margaret.ning@fog.org.au.



In this issue

Program & upcoming FOG events
News roundup
FOG advocacy
Cultivation corner
Greening Australia getting into grassy groundcover
Goorooyarroo NR NSW
Stirling Park and Yarramundi Reach
The autumn greenhood orchid

Photo by David Wong taken at the Seeing grasslands photography workshop, see story page 5.

Upcoming FOG Events

Please register for FOG activities with the FOG contact person who can assist with directions and possibly car pooling. By registering, you assist FOG to organise any catering and to provide you with other information you may need.

Visit to Mount Oak

Near Bredbo, Sat 29 Jan
9.30am-4.30pm

Margaret will lead a visit to Mt Oak Community, which is a tract of 1140h apple box grassy woodland and Monaro natural temperate grasslands on the Murrumbidgee near Bredbo. Mount Oak was originally established as a collective community, but today ecosystem restoration and stewardship is the focus. It is home to 250 indigenous plant species, some listed as vulnerable or rare, and a number of discrete vegetation types at different elevations and aspects. For registration and more information, contact Margaret on 6241 4065 margaretning@iprimus.com.au.

Visit to regenerating bushland Afternoon tea and a talk on Containerised seed production

Sat 19 Feb, 1-5pm

Greening Australia (GA) has generously offered to show FOG members the natural regeneration that has taken place in the ACT, with GA assistance, since the 2003 fires. GA will be driving a ten seater bus, so first in, best dressed. Extra cars may tag-along.

This will be followed by afternoon tea back at GA's headquarters in Aranda, and a presentation regarding GA's recent ventures into establishing understorey biodiversity (e.g. re-introduction of *Rutidosia leptorrhynchoides* into Jerrabomberra Wetlands) and their new containerised seed production (also see article on page 9). GA hopes that FOG members will be interested in providing some assistance in these areas, e.g. notifying GA where local plants are seeding. There may be time for a tour around the nursery.

Registration and further information contact Linda on phone 6288 6916 or linda@fog.org.au.

Frogs in our backyard

Mon-Sun 17-23 Jan

The theme at Snakes Alive 2011 is *Frogs in our backyard*.

FOG highly recommends this outstanding display of local herpetofauna organised by the ACT Herpetological Association which provides excellent information on keeping frogs and reptiles, and their conservation in the wild. This is ideal for children and adults.

Costs: adults \$5 (concession \$4) and child \$2. Monies raised assist student and other educational and research projects. Enquiries: info@actha.org.au or phone 6250 9540.

Learning agriculture from traditional owners Geoff Robertson

Did you know that local Aboriginal people cultivated 'yam daisy gardens', reconstituted and moved soil around the landscape, encouraged the survival of 'fruit orchards' for their pigeons, practised water conservation, burnt areas in particular ways to unlock seed stores, and cultivated grasses, bush lettuce and water parsley?

This was all part of their traditional knowledge of the flora and fauna and its flow through the landscape in the different seasons. This knowledge served to sustain their resources which they used for food, medicine, fibre (for carrying tools and food), and shelter. These matters will be illustrated at the workshops being organised by FOG as part of the *Connecting the community to natural values and resources in the landscape* project.

As a prelude FOG is planning one or two shorter events (up to half a day each) to enable people to learn more about the project and the benefits they may obtain from attendance. The first of these events is planned for a week day in early February.

Five two-day workshops are planned, one in late early March and one in late April (both during the week), two in spring and one next year. Information on the workshops was included in the Sept-Oct newsletter.

FOG is very fortunate to have Rod Mason, Ngarigo elder and natural resource scientist, to provide the workshop. Geoffrey Simpson is assisting with these events.

Unfortunately, we cannot be more precise about the detail, but if you have any inquiries, please contact: Geoff Robertson (geoff.robertson@fog.org.au or 02 6241 4065).

FOG Membership To join or renew

FOG membership entitles you to receive our newsletter and e-Bulletin, to attend FOG's many and diverse activities, and much more.

The cost is small: \$20 for individuals and families, \$5 for students/concessions and \$50 for organisations. Membership is due on 1 January each year.

Membership forms are available on our website: www.fog.org.au and you may pay by cheque or electronically.

While donations are not tax deductible, they are always very welcome.

For inquiries contact Margaret Ning on 02 6241 4065 or membership@fog.org.au

News Roundup

After the snow

Jamie Pittock

SAT 16 OCT As volunteers set out in the snows of north Canberra on early Saturday morning, following 60 mm of rain, the Stirling Park grassy woodland work party was shaping up as the shortest on record. However, the clouds parted over the lake and fourteen volunteers dispatched 45m³ of woody weeds infesting button wrinklewort habitat. Only a large bearded dragon, two skinks and some kangaroos were unhappy with our progress. There is now a large, weed-free area of prime button wrinklewort habitat on the slope of Stirling Park, and with two Conservation Volunteers Australia workdays now scheduled, the wall of woody weeds will retreat substantially.

There was much to be pleased about following FOG's work earlier in autumn. Where cotoneaster thickets had dominated, a carpet of native plantain now stood, interspersed with bulbine lilies, blue devil, royal bluebell, and some perky looking button wrinklewort. The crude hefting of a brushcutter through two broom patches had largely succeeded, with minimal follow up required, and the Madiera vine infestation could not be seen. A check of our previous efforts across button wrinklewort knoll located just two woody



TOP - Jamie's daughter Jenni standing behind the 45m³ pile of woody weeds dispatched by FOG during working bee.

BOTTOM - Mass of native plantain regrowth carpeting an area weeded by FOG last autumn, with remaining woody weeds behind.



weeds and a strand of blackberry, highlighting the rigor of FOG's work.

The wildflowers on the site were looking splendid this spring.

FOG wins Community Action Grant

FOG is the successful recipient of a \$5,190 grant under the Caring for our Country, Community Action Grants. This is a grant offered directly by the Commonwealth Government.

The funds were obtained for the conservation management of EPBC listed natural temperate grassland at Old Cooma Common Grassland Reserve. The funds will be spent on herbicide and meeting some of volunteer expenses.

Under this grant, the acquittal funds needs to be certified by a qualified accountant. Thanks to Margaret Ning, with assistance from David Eddy, for putting the application together.

Rainer's Open Garden

Margaret Ning

27-28 NOV Perfect one day, but very wet, the next! Fortunately, these days, wet is pretty good too, at least for gardens, but unfortunately it took its toll on the attendance on the Sunday of the open garden. On the Saturday morning there had been a couple of spits of rain early on, but the remainder of the day was sunny, and a steady procession of visitors passed through. Around 220 people visited the garden over the two days.

Established in Bungendore over the last seven years, Rainer's garden consists of natives, many from local grassy ecosystems, and some exotics. It was as pretty as a picture. Yellows and whites dominated, grasses (kangaroo, wallaby, stipas and poa) were flowering, but beautiful pinks and purples were also dotted around. Some plants had been trimmed, without appearing too controlled, others had recruited prolifically over the preceding months. The ammobium was in full bloom, as was a particularly tall form of common everlasting (*Chrysocephalum apiculatum*).

A couple of forbs from the Griffith area caught people's eye, particularly feathery groundsel (*Senecio anethifolius*).

Many thanks to all our volunteers (FOG members and Rainer's friends), who helped out and invariably took the time to enjoy the



Margaret Ning and Sandra Hand two of the FOG volunteers manning the Open Garden. FOG posters in background. Pictures of Rainer's garden next time.

garden as well. And a special thanks to Rainer and Marianne, who provided the volunteers with great lunches and the world's best banana bread. Finally, FOG thanks Rainer for donating his part of his Open Garden proceeds to its coffers.

In our next issue there will be a full story by Rainer on his garden.

Swainsons pea discovery

Margaret Ning

Earlier in spring, there was a jump of excitement throughout the grassland community because a small group from the Australian Native Plant Society, led by Roger Farrow, discovered a new population of over one hundred plants of small purple pea (*Swainsona recta*) at the Burra Schoolhouse Reserve, a crown land reserve and an excellent example of

a remnant box-gum woodland, an endangered ecological community.

By early November, Rainer Rehwinkel said that the plant was still flowering and arranged a visit to the reserve on Friday 19 November. The peas were in the final stages of flowering but the site had many other spectacular plants on display, including a mass display of showy copper-wire daisy (*Podolepis jaceoides*). The reserve also contains two other vulnerable species, the silky purple pea (*Swainsona sericea*) and the hoary sunray (*Leucochrysum albicans tricolor*) and also the localised Royalla daisy, recently named as *Brachyscome willisii*.

Small purple pea is an endangered species and is known only from a small number of sites in the local region and usually in small numbers at those sites. While called small, it is actually taller and bears more flowers

than the other Swainsons peas that grow in the local region. We hope this discovery will lead to more protection of this parcel of crown land and the adjoining Aboriginal and travelling stock reserves.

Hall Cemetery

Andy Russell

SUN 7 NOV Eight volunteers attended the Hall Cemetery working bee. We concentrated on controlling emerging seedlings of briar and hawthorn. We had expected these to be evident considering the damp spring and the seed bank that has built up over the years. One quite large hawthorn tree was cut and daubed which we must have overlooked on previous occasions. It will be necessary to continue to monitor and control briar and hawthorn.

Our next project will be to plant some *Bursaria spinosa* which will give some cover for small birds and in effect replace the briar.

Thank you to all who assisted.

Seeing grasslands with camera

David Wong

7 NOV Thirteen people armed with cameras met at Mulligans Flat to take part in the first *Seeing Grasslands* photography workshop. The aim of this workshop was to encourage people to enjoy both the grasslands and their photography and hopefully learn something along the way.

To kick the workshop off John Fitz Gerald gave an introduction on FOG and Chris Holly set the creative challenge for the participants. Participants were asked to imagine that the grassland would no longer be here fifty years from now. How then, would they use photography to document this grassland. Participants were then invited to share the results with the group and the broader community through the *Seeing Grasslands* Flickr group. It was interesting to see the different ways in which people captured what was there.

We were in luck with the weather and also with the great season we have been having. The grasslands look great after all the rain and seemed to be teeming with flowers and insect life.

The facilitators, Chris Holly and I, assisted with any technical questions from the participants. We were happy to see that people had a lot of fun and seemed to get quite a lot out of the workshop, be it in the form of photography tips, enjoying the surrounds, honing their skills or just being reminded of the little things we notice when we take a closer look.

The flickr group is open to the public and we look forward to seeing how more people in the community "see" the grasslands in the future! Further images from participants may be found at (<http://www.flickr.com/groups/seeinggrasslands/>). Please feel free to join the group and add your own!

Photos by David Wong. Top photo, Chris Holly sets the scene.



Please keep horses off the trail

Editor

Have you seen this sign at Mulligans Flat? Even though it is very simple, it is full of information.

There is the information about horses and the need to keep them on the trail. What will your horse rider think about this sign as he or she enters this part of the trail?

Will he or she think, wow this is a high conservation area and be impressed, at least in spring, by the great wildflower display?

More subtly, will he or she notice the excellent drawings of three native grasses by FOG artist Michael Bedingfield and take in their exquisiteness, and even recognise the live examples of the grasses depicted?



Outing with Little Family Grasscover

TUES 26 OCT Twenty-two students and their parents were given a talk on our local grassy ecosystems at Mulligans Flat, an event that had been rescheduled because of rain on 15 October.

Little Family is the local home schooling group, which regularly organise activities for their children. The group had approached FOG earlier in the year to learn about grasslands.

The north paddock at Mulligans Flat was ideal in the circumstances, putting on its best show in many a year. The event started with Geoff talking about the nature of grasslands and woodlands and some of their flowering treasures and cryptic creatures. The FOG posters are a very useful tool in these circumstances. He then took the younger children and their parents, and Margaret Ning took the older children and their parents for a stroll around the grassland.

Many plants were at their best, including large displays of yam daisy, creamy candle, scaly button, early Nancy, and many peas, and both students and parents showed great interest. The children had been encouraged to bring paper and drawing materials. All made a list of their favourite plants, some did a pretty long and thorough plant list. Some did some amazing drawings.

Mulligans Flat also works well because of its mosaic of vegetation and the high numbers of species present. Many parents commented that their eyes were open to a whole new way of looking at their environment, and many of the students made plans for a return visit with their other parent. However, as Geoff pointed out, this was probably the best time of year in the best season for many years.



Photo: Geoff using the FOG posters to talk about grassy ecosystems.

Before the rain Margaret Ning

SAT 23 OCT Eight of us, including regulars Jim, David, Warren, June and Bob, and Andrew, and first timer, Al, attended our second working bee for the year at Old Cooma Common Grassland Reserve (OCCGR).

Setting out from Nimmitabel, Jim and I were apprehensive about the forecast rain, but hoped we could get a few hours spraying done before the weather closed in. So we loaded up two quad bikes and all the other gear and headed off for the Common. The temperature was perfect - quite cool, without being cold. We consisted of two sprayers and three teams of cutters and daubers, and we worked away, including our lunch break, until around 2pm when the rain finally came down. Primarily we sprayed, and cut and daubed, abundant re-growth of briar and hawthorn which were having their best year since 1999, when we first started work on the Common.

One of the highlights of the day included a four foot brown snake. This is only the second snake spotted on

the Common over the ten years we have worked on it - though a snake skin was also spotted a couple of years ago. Also entertaining were five kestrels hovering, presumably looking for reptiles, and a mob of fifteen kangaroos. Also worth seeing were the Australian anchor plant (*Discaria pubescens*) and hoary sunray (*Leucochrysum albicans*) in full flower, with the Monaro golden daisy (*Rutidosia leiolepis*) not far behind them, already budding up. We also added a new plant to our species list for the site - *Bossiaea riparia*. Less exciting were sightings of a hare and a rabbit.

Our post mortem over coffee in a nice warm cafe was that we had done a really good job with the St Johns wort earlier this year, as had the African love grass sprayers, paid by a government grant via Council. We still have another one or two working bees ahead of us before we have tamed the woody weed re-growth, but it will all happen, in the fullness of time.

Maybe you'll be part of the team next time?

FOG advocacy

Naarilla Hirsch

November 2010

The ACT Planning and Land Authority (ACTPLA) has released a discussion paper on planning the Eastern Broadacre Area (covering the Majura and Jerrabomberra valleys) for comment. FOG was pleased to see that a broadscale approach has been attempted in the study of future development in this area, but has concerns about lack of focus on its landscape values. All areas of yellow box-red gum grassy woodland, natural temperate grassland or habitat connectivity should be protected from development and, where appropriate, have immediate conservation action taken to apply suitable management to prevent any loss of their values. Particular concerns related to the proposed roads through high quality natural temperate grassland to Kowen, and the proposed very high speed train route. The paper does include conservation uses, and FOG supported the proposed additional nature reserves. Connectivity and habitat corridors are a particular concern in the study area, and FOG's com-

ments included the need for a better link between the two valleys and enhancement of connectivity corridors through conservation agreements with landholders and incentives to improve habitat in specific parts of the study area.

December 2010

There is a proposal for further residential development in Bonner, just west of Mulligans Flat Road, Gungahlin, submitted under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation 1999 (EPBC Act). We were pleased to see that, even though a 24.5 ha area was assessed for potential development, only 1.7 ha of this area is now proposed for development – the decision of the ACT government has been to proceed with the alternative that would retain significantly more land for biodiversity conservation and keep the remainder of the referral area as open space. We also support a range of measures to reduce impacts on the high conservation areas in the referral, and recommended that the remaining area covered by this referral (i.e. the area not being developed) be integrated into the adjoining Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve, since it is contiguous with the Nature Reserve.

A second proposal submitted under the EPBC Act concerned Block 799 Gungahlin, for which the National Capital Authority (NCA) has drafted a Development Control Plan and recently asked for public comment. FOG understands that a current survey for the striped legless lizard has found that the species is still present in moderate numbers on the block, despite the isolation of the site. Given this, we opposed the proposed development and the use of offsets in these circumstances. FOG also expressed concern about the implication in the referral that the Gungahlin reserves set aside fifteen years ago constitute some sort of offset for this proposed development. In our view, those reserves were offsets for urban developments happening at that time – offsets must be supplementary and not substituting for already existing commitments. We agreed with the suggestion in the referral that a strategic approach to enhance the protection of the striped legless lizard is needed, but thought that such an approach should be determined (and discussed with the community) before any development that might impact on this vulnerable species is considered.

Karleila, a conservation property, is for sale

Karleila is a beautiful and floristically diverse 52 ha (129 acre) property located between Numeralla and Nimmitabel. It's an easy 45 minute drive east of Cooma, with 2WD access all year round. The property includes a furnished, very comfy, 2 to 3 bedroom weatherboard house built in the early 1990s, as well as caravan accommodation and various storage and work sheds. *Karleila* is being sold as the owners have moved interstate.

Karleila sits at around 950 metres elevation, has Tuross River frontage and stunning views onto Wadbilliga National Park and its escarpments. More than 140 local native plant species occur on the property including two listed threatened species, *Diuris ochroma* and *Eucalyptus parvula*.

Vegetation communities include poa-dominated grassland, snow gum-candlebark-ribbon gum woodland and narrow leaf peppermint-candlebark-brownbarrel forest. Naturally wildlife is also abundant on the property. *Karleila* is basically weed-free after three years of targeting the most serious invasive species. For sale @ \$225,000. For further details and/or to arrange a visit, contact Adam Muiy or Kathryn Godman on 03 6244 5621 or mobile 0428 312 384.



Cultivation Corner:

The dry woodland garden

Janet Russell

As I have written before, we have worked on holding the rain that falls on our front garden by the use of swales. During the recent deluge of rain, we have found that our swale system mainly held. We did, however, have overflows, one of which led to water leaving the block. We will deepen the swales where necessary and we will have to find a solution to allow excess water to leave the block without eroding any of the garden or taking mulch with it. This was a major rain event and in these conditions it is not possible to stop water leaving the block altogether.

It is ironic that this work was partly done so that our small grassland plants would survive in dry conditions, and now the ground is soaking. We have increased the range of wild flowers in the garden this year, with the addition of vanilla lily (*Arthropodium* sp), rock lilies (*Bulbine glauca*), Austral bugle (*Ajuga australis*), and golden weather-grass (*Hypoxis hygrometrica*). Some of the grasses such as wheat grass (*Elymus scaber*) get rather robust in a horticultural situation and swamp smaller plants and so we will have to review them with a view to doing some culling.

A group of three blue devils (see top photo) (*Eryngium rostratum*) that are growing close to the path leading to the house will flower this year. These plants germinated in spring 2008 and this will be

their first flowering. There are a couple of others that are not ready to flower yet and a large number of seedlings including some not yet planted out, that will not be flowering for a couple of years. We have a



wild flax (*Linum marginale*) specimen that is a different form from the ones that I have grown from seed – it has been in the garden for about four years. This plant has multiple stems rather than the single stems of the others. I took a closer look at this recently and there are four seedlings doing very well next to the parent plant. This has never produced any

seedlings before. They are reproducing true to form. I am assuming that the plant is not suckering and therefore that these are not outliers. I will have to check.

One surprise flowering (see bottom photo) was the button everlasting (*Helichrysum scorpioides*) which has been renamed *Coronidium scorpioides*. This has never had a good flowering, although it has been in the ground for six years. I had not quite given up hope as it had persisted and multiplied. The leaves are quite wide and woolly. I checked with the NSW Herbarium site (<http://plantnet.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au>) and these plants usually grow in stringybark forest generally on clay-loam soils. They also seem to survive on disturbed land. They obviously like the season.

Insects are around the garden in force, as are the butterflies which I thoroughly enjoy, even though I know that a surge in caterpillar numbers is the natural consequence. After the rains, which seem to not quite have gone yet, we will have to prepare for a hot summer.

Delegate Property for Sale

2,000 acres (or smaller lots) + 4 bed weatherboard house + 1.75k Snowy River frontage + magnificent views and trees + largely gently sloping + native grasses and forbs + heritage slab shearing shed + 3 stand shearing shed + netted orchard

FOG member is selling this beautiful property, with magnificent stands of yellow box, apple box, snow gum and cypress pine, with ground storey of native grasses and some forbs, with views of the snow capped Kosciuszko Range and forested hills. The property has been owned since 2001 and has been managed for conservation for the last five years. The property consists of six portions some of which could be sold separately. One of these is a bush block of 360 acres with power and phone and the other two total approx. 500 acres. One of these latter two has Snowy River frontage. For further information contact Virginia on 02 9389 4130 or agent on 6458 3558.

Greening Australia Getting into Grassy Groundcover

Jason Cummings

Jason Cummings is the Chief Executive Officer for Greening Australia Capital Region

Over its thirty year life Greening Australia has gradually transitioned its focus from trees to ecosystems. The latest chapter of this transition, for the local group, Greening Australia Capital Region (GACR), has been the development of a restoration program focused on reestablishing biodiversity in grassy groundcover systems (woodlands and grasslands).

Whilst we have been proficient at establishing trees and shrubs at broad scales, we recognise the challenge and necessity of being equally proficient at restoring the other biodiversity elements. Accordingly, we are slowly establishing a program *Bringing Back Understorey Diversity* (BBUD), which targets the capacity and capability barriers to restoring diverse understorey, either to our established revegetation, or remnant systems in their various conditions.

There are two current projects that FOG members may be interested in hearing about. One is the introduction of the button wrinklewort (*Rutidosia leptorrhynchoidea*) into Jerrabomberra Grasslands. We have been engaged by ACT Government's Parks and Conservation to propagate seed from five local populations and trial the introduction of this species (see top photo). Planting took place in late spring 2010. Establishment will be monitored and the success of seed sown directly into the paddock will be compared with the success of planting tubestock (sown in the nursery at a similar time). For further information on this project contact Kristy Gould, Parks Conservation and Lands on 6207 5980.

The second exciting initiative is the establishment of a 'containerised production system' for seed of understorey species. Following the lead of the Greening Australia *Grassy Groundcover* project in Victoria, we are trialing the establishment of containers in our nursery, within which, for select species, we grow-on plant material, and collect seed from it. The first species we have set up are the bulbine lillies (see photo) and chocolate lillies, with a target of 10-15 species established by spring next year.

Once the seed production system is established, significant efficiencies are gained in collecting seed for difficult-to-source species. The seed that we collect through containerised seed production will be managed through our ACT Landkeepers nursery, and be made available for

restoration programs in the region, in addition to our own use of the material. There are various opportunities for FOG members to get involved in this initiative. First, you could keep track of what is seeding where and when, and notify us of availability. Second, you could 'adopt a box' and we will provide you with the materials for you to grow the seed for us, or third you could volunteer at our nursery or with seed collecting to help establish the program. For further information on our containerised seed production program, or 'BBUD' more broadly, please contact Bindi Vanzella on 6253 3035 or bvanzella@act.greeningaustralia.org.au.

Photos supplied by Jason. Top: button wrinklewort getting ready for planting out at Jerrabomberra Grasslands. Bottom: GA's first cab off the rank – bulbine lillies in seed production containers at the Aranda Nursery.



Goorooyarroo Nature Reserve NSW

Margaret Ning

SUN 21 NOV I had been looking forward to this visit since I first heard about the NSW site, around four years ago, which would be the last decent spring we had here in Canberra. By the time Sarah Sharp and I arrived at the meeting place, there were already half a dozen vehicles, and a steady succession continued to



arrive for the next fifteen minutes. There were new members, long-standing regulars, and friends of members. As the Canberra Field Naturalists had teamed up with FOG for this event, there were also Field Natters. There was even a bloke on a recumbent bicycle. Then 23 people carpoled into eight 4WDs, and we drove for five kilometers through Goorooyarroo Nature Reserve to a spot where the reserve abuts the New South Wales border.

This area across the border, also known as Goorooyarroo Nature Reserve, has been managed by the Commonwealth Government for a long time but it recently ceded it to New South Wales National Parks. It had been originally acquired by the Commonwealth when the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) was being constituted but the area never became part of the ACT and remained under Commonwealth management.

The immediate visible difference between the NSW and the ACT reserve was the extensive red anther wallaby grass understorey in the NSW reserve. The whole area was still extremely moist, even though it would not have received rain for a week. It was also largely free of the weeds that appear in the ACT reserve such as Paterson's curse and St Johns wort.

We climbed over the entrance gate and the amble began. Sarah was hoping to be greeted by the display of orchids she had seen on her previous visit there four years ago, but, while that didn't happen, it was immedi-

ately obvious that it was a quality site. Spent diuris, sun orchids, and a spider orchid were sighted, as were peak flowering onion orchids (*Microtis* sp.) and a white caladenia (*C. dimorpha/cucullata/gracilis?*). The lilies provided one of the surprises of the day as they included blue grass lily (*Caesia calliantha*). Others included fringe lily (*Thysanotus tuberosus*), yellow rush lily (*Tricoryne elatior*), chocolate lily (*Dichopogon* sp.) and bulbine lily (*Bulbine bulbosa*).

Spent yam daisy (*Microseris lanceolata*) were everywhere, and a few flowering stragglers reminded us of how stunning they would have looked in their prime. Large flowering blue bells (*Wahlenbergia* sp.) were also a picture in prolific patches, as were extensive patches of scaly buttons (*Leptorhynchus squamatus*) and common everlasting (*Chrysocephalum apiculatum*). Flowering parrot pea (*Dillwynia* sp.), bush pea (*Pultenaea* sp.), Australian bindweed (*Convolvulus erubescens*), fuzzweed (*Vittadinia* spp.), ivy goodenia (*Goodenia hederacea*), trigger plants (*Stylidium* sp.), austral sunray (*Triptilodiscus pygmaeus*), billy buttons (*Craspedia* sp.), yellow centaury (*Sebaea ovata*), two flowering lomandra species (*L. multiflora* and *L. filiformis* var *filiformis*), joined the colour parade, as did many others which will have to remain nameless as I did not keep a record of what we saw unfortunately.



Photos by Jean Geue: NSW-ACT border crossing, and give me a home amongst the joycea.

Stirling Park and Yarramundi Reach

Jamie Pittock

FOG's work at Stirling Park and Yarramundi Reach finished with a flourish of activity in November, and managed to avoid the worst of the wet weather in the process.

Wildflower stroll at Stirling Park

On 6 November, Sarah Sharp led a walk to see the splendid wildflower display at Stirling Park. The wet spring had resulted in ideal conditions, and the extensive understory regrowth in the areas weeded by FOG was particularly pleasing. The walk was fully subscribed, with 30 participants, including many local residents from Yarralumla. Complementing Sarah's description of the ecology of the grassy woodland was Ann Gurgler, a local historian, who elaborated on the Indigenous and European history of the site. I explained the management options. The endangered Button Wrinklewort is in full bloom this spring, and the walk looked at the weed invasion of its habitat, examining unmanaged areas as well as areas now cleaned out by FOG work parties. One issue raised in discussion on the walk was whether the populations of *Acacia praevisima* and *Acacia cultriformis* at Stirling Park are indigenous to the area (unlikely) and should be left (FOG work parties have not taken them out so far) or whether they should be treated like Cootamundra Wattle and removed.



Left: the stroll group at Stirling Park on 6 November. Above: Button wrinklewort in flower in a key area of habitat cleared of woody weeds by FOG.



Work party at Stirling Park and Yarramundi Reach

Originally the plan for 20 November was to focus on Yarramundi Reach however the recent rain made conditions at the site challenging. In places, wild oats infestations were over one and half metres tall and the entire site was wet underfoot, with flows in the creek lim-

iting easy passage to the western area. Consequently it was decided to limit work to the minimum necessary to maintain grassland cells planted in September, and trial sowing of themeda and poa thatch as a revegetation technique. Sarah Sharp, Barbara Payne and John Fitz Gerald took on the challenge of monitoring the three replanted areas, weeding them (for the third time in a year), and also sowing the thatch. It appears that the poa and carex cells planted have done well thus far but other species were less successful.

Another ten volunteers working with Margaret Ning and me focussed on removing woody weeds at Stirling Park. The previously weeded area was extended up the Ridge to embrace an extensive button wrinklewort population. Further west along Alexandrina Drive, a new access corridor was weeded from the road into another population in preparation for work parties in 2011. A third large button wrinklewort population was located south along the Ridge amidst scattered woody weeds, and a core area was cleaned out in preparation for the CVA work party the following week.

Continued next page.

Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA)

On 13 and 27 November, CVA in collaboration with FOG led two work parties clearing woody weeds at Stirling Park, extending areas previously cleared by FOG work parties. Around ten volunteers helped on each occasion, aided by the expert knowledge of Peter Franklin and Paul Ratcliffe from Red Hill Regenerators and me, representing FOG. Each work party included a briefing for volunteers on the ecological importance of the site and their work. The first work party cleared out a particularly dense woody weed island around some magnificent old yellow box, within a broader area cleared by FOG. The work uncovered some button wrinklewort plants among the dense cotoneaster thicket, and as now opened up a vista through a substantial area of woodland on Stirling Ridge (see the before and after photos). The second work party cleared out woody weeds from amongst a substantial population of button wrinklewort farther south along the Ridge. In addition, Peter and I sprayed out infestations of St John's wort and serrated tussock. The two work parties cleared an estimated 100 m³ of woody weeds. Renewed CVA assistance in conserving the site is mooted for 2011.

Advocacy for these sites on national lands

FOG continues to engage with the National Capital Authority (NCA) - as the manager of the sites on national lands - and other agencies, to promote conservation of these grassy ecosystems. Recent advocacy has concerned removal of exotic trees and the need for strategic restoration activities. The NCA has consulted FOG on a number of planned management activities. FOG's committee has formed a project advisory group to advance our work on the national capital grasslands.

Planned work in 2011

Work on the three national grassland sites – Scrivener's Hut (on Capital Hill), Stirling Park and Yarramundi Reach – has now been scheduled for 2011, starting from late February. Seven work parties and a walk are planned: please see future FOG programs for details.



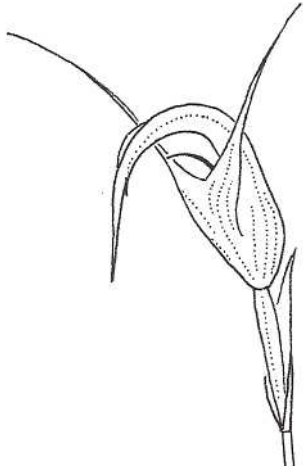
Top: Photo of CVA volunteers under a big yellow box on 13 November, and photo of same site a week later showing the restored site. Love those before and after shots—*Editor*

Postscript

For 2011, FOG sought \$4,210 funding from the NCA. On 30 November, Gary Rake, Chief Executive Officer, wrote to FOG recognising its valuable contribution of the FOG volunteers to the lowland grasslands of the ACT and provided the funding requested. It will be used to meet the cost of materials to undertake seven working bees, chemical and first aid training to meet OHS requirement, and seedlings and seeds for use at Yarramundi Reach.

The autumn greenhood orchid

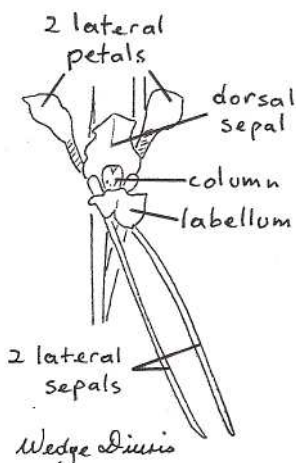
Just when you think all the flowering is done by Michael Bedingfield



The autumn greenhood flowers locally from February to April, more or less in the season which gives it its name. Like many small orchids, it is hard to find, and if the weather has been dry, then very few will come up. I have a favourite colony which is easy to locate and which occurs on a south facing rocky slope in the hills south of Tuggeranong. Amongst the tumble of rocks there is one large stone which creates a small protective overhang. When the plant is dormant, the space under this overhang is just bare dirt, with no appearance of plant life. In the autumn, provided the weather has been kind, and when many other plants have abandoned their finery, it is a charming sight to find a small patch of these orchids growing in their sheltered spot amongst the rocks. The flowers are solitary, one per stem, and sometimes seem to rise out of the bare earth. Along each slender stem are several leaf-like bracts, with the elegant flower at the top, nodding forward slightly. The flower is several shades of green, and white, with dark green bands.

This is a perennial plant, with a small tuber, from which a rosette of up to seven leaves emerges. Sometimes one can find colonies of these small rosettes, with ovate leaves of up to about one cm across. The flowers with stems are up to about 15 cm tall, with the flower itself being 2.5 to 3 cm long. After flowering and seed-set, and before winter arrives, the flowers will have withered and be an untidy brown tangle.

Orchid flowers always have three petals and three sepals, and I've included a drawing of a donkey orchid, the wedge diuris (*Diuris dendrobioides*), to illustrate this and give the names of these parts. They are the two lateral petals and the dorsal sepal, the two lateral sepals and the labellum. In a greenhood, the dorsal sepal and the two lateral petals are loosely joined to form the hood-like structure known as the galea. The lateral sepals are partially joined at the base. For this species they extend forward and upward, giving the appearance of an animal's horns. The labellum is a tongue like item protruding from inside the flower. Pollination is believed to be made by small male insects, fungus gnats or mosquitoes, which pick up on a certain fragrance, and are attracted into the flower. The insect's presence stimulates the labellum to quickly move back and trap it inside the flower. As it forces its escape it touches both male and female flower parts and effects pollination.



The local autumn greenhood is generally known as *Pterostylis revoluta*. There has been much discussion among orchid botanists over this name so you may see different names given to it in the available literature. It is found in grassy woodlands and open eucalypt forest, occurring in eastern NSW, southeast Qld, and Vic. The associated drawing shows some flower stems and leaf rosettes at half size. A single flower is shown separately at normal size.

There are about 120 species of greenhood orchid, about 100 of which occur in Australia. The others are found in NZ, New Guinea and New Caledonia. A number of them look quite like our subject, and several of these occur locally. To describe the differences would require more botanical expertise than I have, but the flowering time is a good clue. In this story I wish only to introduce the reader to another of nature's pretties, the autumn greenhood.

FOG groups and projects

Activities organises FOG field trips, talks, workshops, on-ground works, support to other groups, property visits, and the FOG calendar. Inquiries: activities2@fog.org.au.

Advocacy prepares submissions and advocates for grassy ecosystem issues. It holds occasional meetings and workshops. Inquiries: advocacy@fog.org.au.

African love grass (ALG) monitoring holds monitoring days at the Bush Heritage property at Scottsdale. Inquiries: linda.spinaze@fog.org.au.

Committee & correspondence The Committee organises, coordinates and monitors FOG activities. Members are Geoff Robertson (Pres.), Isobel Crawford (Vice Pres), Sarah Sharp (Vice Pres.) Al Gabb (Sec.), Sandra Hand (Treas), Kim Pullen (Imm. Past Pres), David Eddy, Naarilla Hirsch, Stephen Horn, Tony Lawson, Margaret Ning and Benjamin Whitworth. Andy Russell is public officer. Inquiries/correspondence: committee@fog.org.au. Postal address: FOG, PO Box 987, Civic Square, ACT 2608.

Communication produces *News of Friends of Grasslands* and *FOG e-Bulletin*. Inquiries: geoff.robertson@fog.org.au (newsletter), and tony.lawson@fog.org.au (e-Bulletin).

Cultivation and Conservation encourages growing of local grasses and wild flowers to learn about their horticulture and ecology, and produces *Cultivation Corner*. Inquiries: janet2.russell@fog.org.au.

FOG ANU Fenner School, with the National Capital Authority, holds regular working bees at Yarramundi Reach (grasslands) and Stirling Ridge (woodlands). Inquiries: jamie.pittock@fog.org.au.

Financial matters, excluding membership, contact sandra.hand@fog.org.au or Sandra on 02 4846 1096.

Grassland Flora FOG is now responsible for sales of *Grassland Flora*. Inquiries: booksales@fog.org.au.

General inquiries Contact info@fog.org.au, Geoff Robertson (6241 4065) or Janet Russell (6251 8949).

Golden sun moth In 2008-09, FOG conducted a major survey of GSM in Canberra region. Inquiries: geoff.robertson@fog.org.au.

Hall Cemetery, with ACT Government, holds regular working bees to protect the Hall leek orchid and generally restore the site. Inquiries: andy.russell@fog.org.au.

Media spokesperson Geoff Robertson (6241 4065). FOG is a regular contributor on Radio Landcare, Tues 9-10am on (2XX, Canberra 98.3FM).

Membership and newsletter despatch See Membership box page 2. Newsletter despatch is fourth Tuesday of Feb, Apr, June, Aug, Oct. To help, contact margaret.ning@fog.org.au.

Old Cooma Common (OCC) with Cooma Monaro Shire Council manages the OCC Grassland Reserve. Working bees are held twice yearly. Inquiries: margaret.ning@fog.org.au or david.eddy@fog.org.au.

Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park (STEP) FOG helped establish STEP (at Canberra's International Arboretum), a regional botanic gardens and recovery centre to showcase local ecosystems, especially native grasses and forbs. Inquiries: limestone@grapevine.com.au.

Woodland Flora is planning the production of *Woodland Flora*, the sequel of the popular *Grassland Flora*. Inquiries: sarah.sharp@fog.org.au.

Website (www.fog.org.au) full of FOG information, back issues of *News of Friends of Grasslands*, and program details. Inquiries: webmanager@fog.org.au.