



# News of Friends of Grasslands

Supporting native grassy ecosystems

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March–April 2015

## FOG forward planning

**Right now!** FOG membership renewals are due, if you haven't renewed already. Please see below and page 2.

**17 March, Tuesday: FOG Annual General Meeting.** All FOG members are invited to the AGM, 5.30 for 6.00 pm, at the Conservation Council office, Lena Karmel Lodge, Barry Drive, Acton. We may go to a restaurant afterwards. The agenda and notices are included with this newsletter. Please bring them with you to the AGM.

**12 April, Sunday:** Memorial walk in the Brindabellas, for Laurie Adams (see page 4)

**12 April, Sunday:** Mugga Mugga Heritage Festival, 10–3. FOG will have a stall there. You are welcome to help on the stall – or why not just come and say 'hallo'?

## Restoration activities

Meetings at FOG's restoration sites are about to begin again, at the dates listed here. Contact people are in brackets.

**1 March, Sunday:** *Stirling Park* (Jamie Pittock) – a special day with presentations and a bbq. **Register by 27 February.**

**7 March, Saturday:** *Hall Cemetery* (John Fitz Gerald)

**29 March, Sunday:** *Stirling Park* (Jamie Pittock).

**11 April, Saturday:** *Hall Cemetery* (John Fitz Gerald)

**15 April, Wednesday:** *Stirling Park* (Peter McGhie)

**2 May, Saturday:** *Poplars Grassland* (John Fitz Gerald).

**3 May, Sunday:** *Stirling Park* (Jamie Pittock)

Details of these meetings are on page 3.

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Contacts for FOG groups & projects

We encourage you to consider nominating at the AGM to be on the FOG committee. The only requirement is enthusiasm to participate in FOG and its activities. Some notes on 'being on the committee' are on the AGM agenda insert. For more information, contact Sarah Sharp (at [president@fog.org.au](mailto:president@fog.org.au), or phone 0402 576 412).

## Thanks to members

Thank you to all of you who have renewed your FOG membership for 2015. FOG exists, achieves and has influence because of **you!**

If your renewal has not yet arrived in FOG's PO Box or bank account, *you will find a coloured dot on your newsletter.* If the dot is wrong, or if you don't want to renew, please tell us in an email, to [membership@fog.org.au](mailto:membership@fog.org.au)

For ways to renew, please see page 2.



An echidna in Stirling Park on 31 January, hiding in a pile of semi-decomposed woody weeds left from FOG's successful control of broom infestation in early 2010. Photo: Jamie Pittock.

## FOG advocacy

Naarilla Hirsch

### December

1. The recent Omnibus Territory Plan variation out for comment included the Amtech site in Fyshwick, a site in which FOG has a long-standing interest. FOG supported the change of most of the Natural Temperate Grassland (NTG) areas to public open space, as proposed by this variation to the Territory Plan. FOG expressed concern about management of such public open space areas, because this site needs better weed control and ongoing management of the site to preserve its conservation values.

2. The proposed light rail service from Gungahlin to Civic has been referred to the Commonwealth under the EPBC Act, because it potentially will have impacts on some NTG areas with conservation values. While the referral lacked details on the exact areas to be affected, it argued that the proposal should not be a controlled action because it is 'within the existing footprint of the current road corridor'. However, the proposal potentially affects three sites identified by the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment (CSE) as NTG, as well as at least two threatened species. FOG's view was that the referral must be a controlled action and that there needs to be a detailed ecological assessment of the affected areas, at an appropriate time of year to ensure that the information collected accurately reflects the status of each site. In particular FOG opposed any development that has impacts on the largest of the three sites, in Mitchell (site GU04 in the CSE's 2009 report), noting that the referral lacks any mitigation strategy or offset proposals.

3. Queanbeyan City Council released the Draft South Jerrabomberra Development Control Plan (DCP) 2014 for public comment. The DCP's aims and purpose include the identification, protection and management of environmentally and culturally sensitive areas. FOG welcomes that, but would like the aims of the DCP to also include conservation, management and enhancement of conservation areas in perpetuity. FOG also made comments about the Master Plan itself – about buffer zones, the location of a water main, and about avoiding impacts on Environmental Conservation areas.

4. A proposal to delist the Superb Parrot from the Commonwealth's threatened species list was put out for public consultation. FOG's view was that the Superb Parrot should continue to be listed as vulnerable under the EPBC Act for several reasons. One was that removal of threatened species status is likely to increase the disappearance of suitable habitat and nesting trees, since in some cases this is the reason trees have been retained across the landscape. Another concern was the use of three generations in the criteria for listing. Three generations of the Superb Parrot is 22.5 years, much shorter than the more than 120 year timeframe it takes for trees such as Blakely's Red Gum to grow to maturity and produce suitable nesting hollows. FOG was also not convinced that the evidence for much larger numbers of Superb Parrots is based on rigorous scientific studies.

### January

5. Another proposal to delist *Leuchochrysum albicans* var. *tricolor*, Hoary Sunray, from the Commonwealth's threatened species list (on the basis that all varieties are being delisted) was put out for public consultation. FOG's view was that, before the delisting occurs, genetic studies should be undertaken to find out whether, in fact, it is a separate species, since different varieties of *L. albicans* are often found in different locations and potentially have different genetics. FOG was concerned that *L. albicans* var. *tricolor* in the Central and Southern Tableland regions of New South Wales occurs mainly on sites which do not have formal conservation protection, so that it should retain EPBC Act listing until genetic studies are undertaken to prove conclusively whether or not it is a separate taxon. Since putting in this submission, FOG has been advised that a manuscript that elevates the Hoary Sunray to a subspecies has been submitted to *Muelleria* (the research journal published by Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne).

The full text of FOG submissions appears on our website.

## Membership matters!

### Membership renewals were due on 1 January

When you are a paid up member, you get the newsletter promptly as soon as it is published, 2-monthly. (Newsletters only appear on the website 2 months later, once the next issue is out.) If you are not paid up, you will soon stop receiving newsletters, and this issue will have a coloured dot on it.

FOG member activities include: mornings restoring grassy areas and sharing morning tea (which FOG provides); excursions to grassland and grassy woodland areas with expert guides; the mid-winter afternoon of talks and 'slides'; and the AGM in March.

As a member you can also join the Advocacy subgroup, and contribute research and/or expertise to FOG submissions on policy and management of grassy ecosystems.

Membership costs:

\$20 per calendar year (for individuals, families, not-for-profit organisations),  
\$5 per year (for students, concessions),  
\$50 per year (corporate).

Life Membership is available. To inquire, contact <membership@fog.org.au>.

You can pay by EFT, to  
BSB 633 000, A/c no. 124770835  
giving your name as identifier,  
or post a cheque payable to Friends of  
Grasslands Inc., to:  
PO Box 440, Jamison Centre ACT 2614.

FOG warmly welcomes a new member:

**Ross Dennis**, a student, of Lyneham  
ACT.

**Did you know?** As a member, you can see the newsletter in 'glorious technicolor' when it first comes out, by asking to be emailed it as a pdf file. You can have it *as well as*, or instead of, the grey printed version. To join the 'emailed newsletter' list, please email: [Margaret.Ning@fog.org.au](mailto:Margaret.Ning@fog.org.au) or [Ann.Milligan@fog.org.au](mailto:Ann.Milligan@fog.org.au). Go on, spoil yourself...!



## Details for restoration activities, March – mid-May

### A special day at Stirling Park, 1 March

This is an invitation to you to help in a very special restoration day, followed by a barbecue lunch, on Sunday 1 March. We need lots and lots of help for this day.

FOG is supporting the Ngunawal traditional owners and our partners in the Molonglo Catchment Group in work to restore a modest block of ACT Government-owned woodland at the eastern end of Stirling Park. Our efforts will be benefiting some important cultural sites, as well as a large population of the endangered Button Wrinklewort *Rutidosis leptorrhynchoides*.

This land has been largely neglected and hosts many weeds. We will focus on removing rubbish and woody weeds. The morning's work will be followed by presentations on the Ngunawal and biodiversity significance of the site, with a BBQ, 12 noon – 1 pm.

We very much hope you can be there. Please register, for catering purposes, by **Friday morning, 27 February**, with Jamie Pittock, 0407 265 131; [jamie.pittock@fog.org.au](mailto:jamie.pittock@fog.org.au)

**Meeting point:** Dirt car park on the south side of Alexandrina Drive, Yarralumla, opposite Lotus Bay (midway between Flynn Drive and Mariner Place).

**Activities:** Cutting and daubing woody weeds, rubbish removal, talks – fun!

**Bring:** Water, hat, sunburn cream, solid shoes.

**Note:** The event will be cancelled in the unlikely event of a total fire ban day or if the forecast is for temperatures of 35°C or more.

### Other Stirling Park restoration days

29 March, 15 April, 3 May

On **Sunday 29 March**, we shall continue the work begun on 1 March in the section of Stirling Park that is ACT Government land. The meeting point, work targets and things to bring are the same as above. Please register with Jamie Pittock, to ensure there are enough tools and enough morning tea for all.

Then on **Wednesday 15 April** and **Sunday 3 May** we shall return to National Capital Authority land to add to the excellent results we have achieved there since 2009/2010 (e.g. see page 1).

Details of meeting points and work locations for these two days will be available when you register with Peter McGhie (for 15 April; [pmcghe@optusnet.com.au](mailto:pmcghe@optusnet.com.au)) and Jamie Pittock (for 3 May; [jamie.pittock@fog.org.au](mailto:jamie.pittock@fog.org.au)). Registering also ensures there will be enough food and drink for morning tea, and tools and herbicide to work with.

### Forward planning for National Lands

For those of you who plan ahead, these are the dates of restoration work on National Lands sites for the rest of 2015:

**Stirling Park:** Sunday 31 May  
Sunday 28 June  
Sunday 26 July  
Wednesday 16th September  
Sunday 27th September  
Wednesday 14th October  
Sunday 1st November  
Wednesday 11th November  
Sunday 29th November

**Yarramundi Reach:** Sunday 30th August  
Sunday 15th November

### Hall Cemetery restoration

7 March, Saturday 9.00–11.00

11 April, Saturday 9.00–11.00

These two autumn mornings' work will continue our control of weeds and selected patches of exotic grass. The major activity will be spot application of herbicide through the grassy woodland. Some physical removal (cut and daub) of briar regrowth can also be done. Morning tea will be provided. Please dress for the occasion, considering weather and tall grass. It is MOST important that you register so that enough equipment and morning tea is on hand to match the enthusiasm of volunteers.

Please register with John Fitz Gerald, at [<john.fitzgerald@fog.org.au>](mailto:john.fitzgerald@fog.org.au), by 5 March (for 7 March) and 9 April (for 11 April).

The Hall Cemetery entrance is off Wallaroo Road, near the Barton Highway intersection.

### Poplars Grassland, Jerrabomberra

2 May, Saturday morning

This is advance notice of the restoration workparty coming up at Poplars, the high-value woody grassland site, east of Lanyon Drive in Jerrabomberra near Queanbeyan NSW. For this activity FOG joins with Queanbeyan Landcare to battle woody weeds, as we did in 2014.

There will be reminders in the e-bulletin (expected at end of March) and the next newsletter (late April), and you will need to register with John Fitz Gerald to find out the meeting time and place, and to ensure you are catered for, for morning tea and tools ([john.fitzgerald@fog.org.au](mailto:john.fitzgerald@fog.org.au)).



The echidna at Stirling Park (see page 1), close-up.  
Photo: Jamie Pittock.

## *Memorial walk for Laurie Adams*

Paul Cheeseman

A walk to farewell Laurie Adams will take place on **Sunday 12 April 2015**, as noted in the January–February newsletter article in memory of Laurie.

Laurie requested in his will that his ashes be spread from Mt Gingera, and we will be doing that from the summit. That is the purpose of the memorial walk.

The walk will be from the Mt Gingera car park to Mt Gingera. A walk description, including grade and length is provided here, courtesy of the National Parks Association of the ACT (NPAACT).

For FOG members, **Margaret Ning** is the point of contact and the person who will arrange FOG car-pooling. Please let her know ([margaret.ning@fog.org.au](mailto:margaret.ning@fog.org.au)) if you wish to attend. Sign-on with Andrew Zelnik or Paul Cheeseman on the day.

The day's schedule is:

6.25 am Sunrise  
7.00 am Meet first at the Cooleman Court car park off Namatjira Drive & Mahony Court, Weston Ck, for car pooling  
7.30 am Leave Canberra  
9.15 am Arrive at Mt Gingera Car Park  
9.30 am Start Walk  
12 noon Arrive Mt Gingera for lunch and farewell  
1.30 pm Start return walk  
3.30 pm Arrive car park  
5.15 pm Arrive Canberra  
5.44 pm Sunset.

Walk description from: <http://www.npaact.org.au/res/File/2012/Walks%20for%20Namadgi%20Big%20Book.pdf>

### MOUNT GINGERA

The walk to Mount Gingera starts at the locked gate below Mount Ginini on the unsealed Mount Franklin Road, 25 kilometres from Piccadilly Circus. The major part of this walk is along the Mount Franklin Road beyond the locked gate. On the way along this road is the marked turnoff to Stockyard Spur, and further on the timber-walled corrugated-iron-roofed Pryors Hut is passed. It is named after Lindsay Pryor, a forester who initiated the planting of various arboreta along the Brindabellas. The hut is worth a look and is a good place for a rest stop. A further 1.4 kilometres along the road at a sharp bend to the left, crossing a small creek, is the track to Mount Gingera. It starts as an old 4wd track but continues soon after as more of a bush track. It climbs relatively steeply for about 190 metres through open country to the rocky summit where there are good views into Namadgi to the east, Kosciuszko National Park to the west and south and back along the Brindabellas to the north. Mount Gingera is well known for Bogong Moths in spring.

Return by the same route, the last 2 kilometres of which leading to the carpark is a steady uphill slog.

Walking distance: About 13.5 km return

Grade: Moderate due to steep climb up Mt Gingera

## *Vale Garth Dixon, OAM (for conservation)*

Lucinda Royston

Reginald Garth Dixon passed away peacefully at noon on Tuesday 20 January 2015 in an ACT hospice on the shores of Lake Burley Griffin. As well as being a member of FOG, he and his late partner Ros Stafford were early members of the Field Naturalists Society of Canberra and represented Goulburn Field Naturalists Society for a number of years on the Nature Conservation Council of NSW.

Garth and Ros established three conservation properties: one north of Collector, Warriwillah (west of Michelago) and Black Ridge (SSE of Bredbo); their conservation purposes were recorded on each title deed, after agreement from the relevant NSW Minister.

On Black Ridge Garth discovered that koalas not only feed on leaves, they also chew the bark of brittle gum *Eucalyptus mannifera* – one in every 30 trees – a behaviour so far only recorded over some 60,000 ha on the Monaro (see the video *Canberra Times: Koalas Chew Bark*).

The memorial service for Garth was held on 27 January.

## *Some other forthcoming events*

**Aboriginal Heritage walks, ACT**, 8.30–11.30 am, Sundays **22 March, 26 April, 3 May**. Walks and talks about Ngunawal culture. RSVP (essential) to: [projects@sactcg.org.au](mailto:projects@sactcg.org.au), by 15 March, for the 22 March walk; and by 19 April and 26 April for the others. Also, **Black Mountain since ancient times**, Sunday **12 April**, 10 am – 1 pm. For details, see <http://www.thunderstone.net.au/index.php/events/year.listevents/2015/02/21/>

**Chem-free Weeds Management**, Monday **30 March**, 8.30–5.30 in Sydney. \$240 (but less if you qualify for a discount or subsidy). See <http://www.eventbee.com/v/chemfreeweedsydney2015/> for details and to register.

**Tour of Mt Annan (NSW) woodland restoration and plant bank**, Friday **13 March**, 10 am – 2.30 pm. Re-establishment of native grasses after clearing olives; and 'Behind the scenes' (\$20 per head) at the Australian PlantBank. For details and bookings, see <http://www.aabr.org.au/>.

**Research on fire to rehabilitate native grasslands** and for integrated weed control, **18 April**, Saturday, 9–11 am, at Scheyville and Cattai National Parks, NSW. For details and bookings, see <http://www.aabr.org.au/>.

**NSW Weeds Conference**, Cooma, 12–15 October 2015. Abstracts are due on **27 February**. Early bird registration is open till 30 June. For details, <http://www.weedscooma.com.au/>



## *News roundup*

### **Opening of ‘The Clearing’ at Southern Tablelands Ecosystem Park, 20 February**

*Geoff Robertson*

Many current and former FOG members attended the opening of the new education space, ‘The Clearing’, at the Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park (STEP), which is Forest 20 within the National Arboretum Canberra. Sarah Sharp represented FOG.

According to the *Canberra Times* (Saturday 21 February p. 7),

The name ‘The Clearing’ was the brainchild of landscaper Barbara Payne, who said she was inspired because ‘clearings were special places where light shone in and you could stop, look and listen to the bush ... where people gather to meet, have lunch, and take in the sounds and sights’.

[Barbara, who is an active member of FOG and STEP, designed the understorey landscape of STEP. Ed.]

The Clearing will now provide an informal amphitheatre for education activities at the STEP garden. Already plans are afoot to bring school groups there. These were the themes of the short speeches by Margie Bourke (who is the President of STEP), and Territory and Municipal Services Minister Shane Rattenbury MLA (who opened The Clearing), and David Shorthouse (STEP Vice President and co-designer, and a member of FOG), each of whom acknowledged the role of FOG and the Australian Native Plant Society (ANPS) and the many volunteers who had made STEP a reality. Sarah and Shane and Alison Roach (President of ANPS) each planted a tree.

The concept of STEP grew out of two ideas. The establishment of an ecosystem education and recovery centre was an idea that came from within FOG. The idea of a regional botanic garden which would focus on the ecosystems of the Southern Tablelands, especially their herbaceous plants, came from the ANPS. Jon Stanhope, the Chief Minister at the time (who also was present at the opening of The Clearing), was very supportive of the concept, which was initially workshopped. Following that, STEP was born, though it was some years before it found a home at the Arboretum. Today, STEP is a successful community-based group project in a welcome niche at the Arboretum which is fast becoming a Canberra showpiece.



The crowd gathered for the opening of The Clearing (above). Sarah Sharp, Alison Roach and Shane Rattenbury (below) marked the event by planting a tree each.  
Photos: Geoff Robertson



The Clearing in its STEP context during or soon after completion, showing the paths leading into it.  
Photo: Andy Russell, as included in *News of Friends of Grasslands*, November–December 2014, page 11.



## News roundup, continued

### Art at the Airport

*Naarilla Hirsch*

Recently I went to the opening of a delightful little exhibition of watercolour paintings of grassland plants painted by award-winning botanical artist Sharon Field. Sharon sees botanical art as a way to transform people's perceptions of the natural world, and did these paintings in association with Greening Australia.

Canberra Airport is sponsoring the exhibition to celebrate the achievements and the incredible diversity and beauty of Natural Temperate Grasslands (NTG). Canberra Airport and Greening Australia are in partnership to restore NTG on the Airport grounds; the FOG newsletter of November–December 2012 has information about the restoration project.

The exhibition will be on show for a year and can be viewed any time during business hours. The address is 23 Brindabella Circuit, Brindabella Business Park, and the paintings are in the foyer of the building. If you are out near the airport, it is well worth the time to have a look. I'll be going back to look at them again.



*Dichopogon fimbriatus* by Sharon Field. Part of the exhibition of Sharon Field's paintings of Natural Temperate Grassland flora at the Canberra Airport precinct, 23 Brindabella Circuit, Brindabella Business Park, for 2015. © Sharon Field.

### News of the summer rain

*John Fitz Gerald*

The summer rains delayed seed ripening of *Themeda* in this region by a few weeks, but it was in full seed by early January (top photo). Windmill Grass *Chloris truncata* (middle photo) has grown well in this region with the summer rain, as also has the woodland in Hall Cemetery (lowest photo), where the Bursarias planted by FOG have flowered well.



Glorious *Themeda* grassland at Yarramundi Reach, ACT, in full seed on 5 January 2015.

The hills of the National Arboretum are in the background.

Photo:  
John Fitz Gerald.



A spike of Windmill Grass *Chloris truncata*, with a scale bar 1 mm long. Spikelets lie in two staggered rows, and each has fertile and infertile parts, both with long awns attached. The black colour indicates seeds have matured.

Photographed in the Seedbank at the Australian National Botanic Gardens by John Fitz Gerald © ANBG.



Bursarias planted by FOG at Hall Cemetery continue to grow taller, and this year they flowered well. The group in the photo, with the original planting stakes, is in healthy cover of Weeping Grass. Exotic grasses in this spot have been almost eliminated.

Photo:  
John Fitz Gerald.

## News continued: Books

### Grasses of the NSW Tablelands

Geoff Robertson & Margaret Ning

Just browsing through this new book by Harry Rose, Jenene Kidson, Carol Rose and Clare Edwards is enough to make one want to get out there and identify as many grasses as one can.

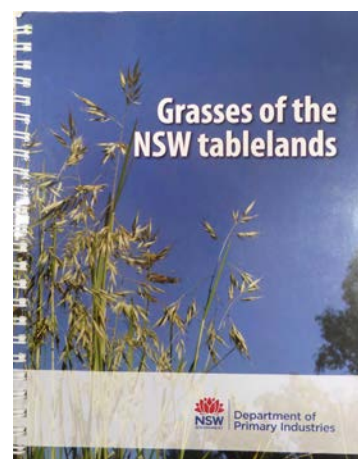
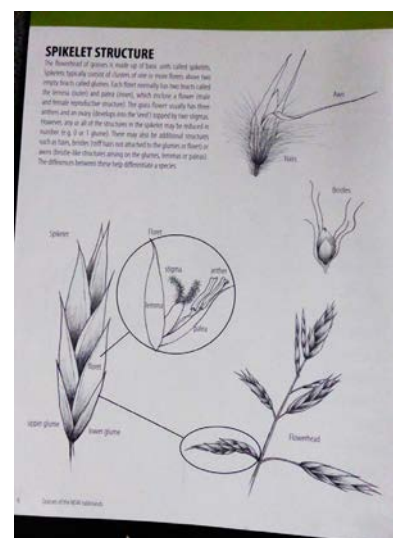
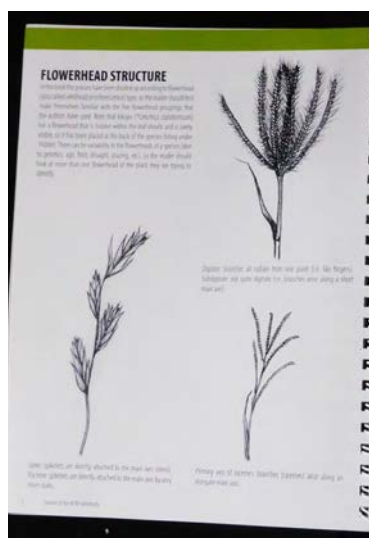
Identifying grasses is an extremely daunting task for the enthusiastic amateur, and even for botanists and people who specialise in such matters. As the authors point out there are more than 400 introduced and native grass species in the NSW tablelands (northern, central and southern). This book may not cover all of them but they have included more than 150 of the more common species, which they have divided into four major groups, determined by flowerhead type (digitate, panicle, spatheate, etc.) and then listed in order of scientific name.

The book is very user-friendly. Up front are some simple diagrams on flowerhead, plant and spikelet structure, and a short glossary which provides a basic understanding of how to understand and identify grass species. For each of the species presented there is a map showing its tableland area(s), whether it is native/introduced or annual/perennial, and generally three photos of each species. Then there is an easy-to-read description, distribution (habitat), importance of the grass (for biodiversity and pasture) and its management, and similar species. The authors state this information is not meant to be definitive, but it certainly takes the reader a long way into each of these areas.

There is a good balance between common and scientific language which should appeal to amateurs and professionals, and anyone in between. The book also brings the reader up-to-date with the latest scientific name changes for some grasses. I only had one niggling query after going through the book, and that was regarding the large photo for Chilean Needle Grass (CNG) on page 121. To me (Margaret) it resembled Tall Stipa *Austrostipa bigeniculata* rather than CNG, but I have been reassured by Harry; it was a valuable lesson in 'variability'!

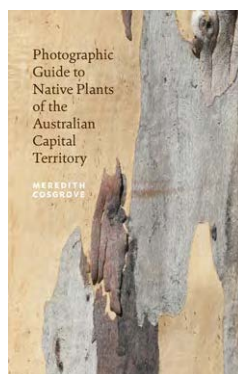
This is a great book for anyone interested in grasses, and I would highly recommend its purchase. It is published by the NSW Department of Primary Industry, has a RRP of \$20, and can be bought online at <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/aboutus/resources/bookshop/agguide-grasses-of-the-nsw-tablelands/>. Postage is \$8 for 1–2 books and \$12 for 3–5.

I wonder what co-author Harry Rose (a member of FOG) is planning next, as he has also contributed to the authorship of *Grasses of coastal NSW* and *Legumes and herbs of coastal NSW*, both of which grace our shelves and get a workout when we travel north.



*Grasses of the NSW Tablelands* is very user-friendly.  
Photos: Margaret Ning.

### Photographic Plant Guide to Native Plants of the ACT



Meredith Cosgrove, who is based at the Australian National University, has released a *Photographic plant guide to native plants of the ACT*.

Details and example pages are at <http://meadow-argus.com/>.

This new plant guide features 327 species native to the ACT, with multiple images per species, distribution maps, key identification features – and more. It covers most of the common flowering plants in the ACT (grasses, sedges and rushes not included).

A5-size, 360 pages, laminated softcover, \$45 per copy.

For online purchases, visit <http://meadow-argus.com/>.  
For cash purchases and local pickup, email Meredith at [meadow.argus.books@gmail.com](mailto:meadow.argus.books@gmail.com) or call her on 0425 178 218.



## Cultivation corner: grassland species in cultivation

### The little-known world of the pollinators

Janet Russell

For those with an amateur interest in growing Australian plants it is difficult to understand why some plants reproduce themselves and others do not. Generally there is not much information available about the plants' relationships with pollinators. Many articles use language couched in terms of assumption or belief about which pollinators are involved. Some plants reproduce quite quickly after being introduced into the garden and others take years.

There were posts on one of my chat-lines about Honeybees, *Apis mellifera*, questioning whether native insects are deprived of nectar when the introduced honeybees are also present. We have large numbers of plants flowering in our garden most of the warmer months of the year. When I went to investigate I discovered that the honeybees were there and were well-distributed among the plants. They are not the only introduced insects in our garden attracted to nectar.

I was surprised when I first realised the diversity of invertebrates in the garden, and this year there were even more, perhaps because of extra rain. We always have a number of Cabbage-white Butterflies *Pieris rapae* flying around but I was surprised to see them flitting between the flowering *Pelargonium australe*. I have also seen Skipper butterflies and Honeybees on these plants and whatever is pollinating them is doing a very efficient job – they have proliferated in our garden.

On the larger shrubs there is usually more than one type of insect at a time. The River Lomatia *Lomatia myricoides* had flowered for three years but until this season I had not noticed any insects or birds on it. This year there have been Honeybees, ants, Common Brown Butterflies and Tachinid flies apparently chasing nectar on the plant at the same time. There are still no birds. I have seen the Honeybee on so many of our native plants, including shrubs like *Philotheca* and *Prostanthera* species, often accompanied by various small native bees and hover flies. Herbs such as Chocolate Lilies *Dichopogon fimbriatus*, and Bluebells



Honeybee on Chocolate Lily



Common Brown on River Lomatia



Skipper on *Goodenia elongata*



Blue Tachinid fly on *Platysace lanceolata*

*Wahlenbergia* also host honeybees. Other blue-flowered plants, however, such as *Scaevola* and Rock Isotome *Isotoma axillaris* seem to be the almost exclusive preserve of the delightful native Blue-banded Bee *Amegilla cingulata*.

In the last couple of years we have had *Hardenbergia violacea* seedlings springing up, and last month I noticed two Nodding Blue Lilies *Stypandra glauca* seedlings. The two mature Nodding Blue Lilies we have in the garden were planted over eight years ago and we have had *Hardenbergia* in the garden for years. Both of these species thrive in the local bushland.

Not all insect species that visit flowers are pollinators. Flowers host spiders, but some spiders lie in wait for insect prey and probably inhibit pollination. There are day and night pollinators, and there are preferences for flower colour or perfume, as well as very specialised species relationships. It is little wonder that unless a species is very significant for economic or conservation reasons there is little known about the relationships between plants and pollinators.



Blue-banded Bee on *Isotoma axillaris*

Some plants do not set fertile seed until they reach a level of maturity, and this together with unknowns such as available pollinators, length of seed dormancy and a plant's special soil requirements means it is difficult to know when and if a species is likely to reproduce. Pleasantly, there is always a reason to wonder what may happen in the garden next.

Photos by Janet Russell



## The Eastern Wallaroo, *Macropus robustus robustus*, a large but shy kangaroo

Michael Bedingfield

The Eastern Grey Kangaroo *Macropus giganteus* is very familiar to us. But its close relative, the Wallaroo, is not a common sight. When I moved to Conder in 1992, the suburb was relatively undeveloped, and I was surrounded by lots of open space, but with Tuggeranong Hill and the foothills to Mount Rob Roy forming a long arc to the north and east. I spent a lot of time exploring those hills, and I occasionally saw a solitary Wallaroo, and less often two or three together. When the suburbs of Lanyon Valley were only partly built, the Wallaroos would occasionally come down out of the hills to graze in the open valley. They are still living in those steep hills, and I have seen them only a few hundred metres from the houses. It is common to see them in the hills near Tharwa Sandwash in the Gigerline Nature Reserve, in the late afternoon during the cooler months. I have also seen them on the lower slopes of Mt Tennent.

They are much shyer than kangaroos, and they usually see me before I see them. When disturbed the big males often make a loud exhalation of their breath. Perhaps this is in preparation for flight or fight, but it alerts me to their presence. They will bound off slowly and heavily, until they are at a safe distance, or until they disappear into the trees or over a hill. The smaller females and young ones move more quickly and lightly.

There are three species of Wallaroo, which are part of the genus *Macropus*. The most widespread is the Common Wallaroo, *Macropus robustus*, which occurs throughout the continent and has four subspecies. The local ones are called the Eastern Wallaroo (and also Common Wallaroo), and their scientific name is *Macropus robustus robustus*. They inhabit both sides of the length of the Great Dividing Range. Males and females differ in

appearance, but they both have thick shaggy fur. The males are dark grey in colour, with paler grey or white on their front. The females are much smaller than the males, being only half as heavy, and their colouring is much lighter than the males. This subspecies is slightly smaller than the Eastern Grey Kangaroo, but has a stockier build.

To the west of the Great Dividing Range on the open plains, and all the way to the west coast of the continent, Common Wallaroos have shorter fur, are reddish in colour, and are known as the Euro, *M. r. erubescens*. The subspecies *M. r. woodwardi* lives in the Kimberleys and Northern Territory. None of these three subspecies is considered to be under threat. The fourth is *M. r. isabellinus*, which is restricted to Barrow Island, is comparatively small, and is considered to be vulnerable.

Wallaroos live in a variety of habitats, from dry desert grasslands to wet sclerophyll forest. They are largely nocturnal, emerging to graze in open grassy areas in the late afternoon or early evening. They retreat to rocky hillsides or dense vegetation for shelter during the day. They have a preference for rocky hills and rugged terrain and tend to be secretive. Their feet are adapted to cope with a rocky landscape. They are mostly solitary, but do form small groups of two or three. The Euro is adapted to arid conditions and does not have to drink, obtaining all necessary water from its food and from night dew.

I have provided two photographs of the Eastern Wallaroo: one of an adult male (right below), and the other of a young female (left) showing her much lighter colours. Since they are so shy it was hard to get close enough for good photos, especially in the fading light. It took some time to get a photo of the larger male, but eventually I saw one before it saw me! I have become quite fond of seeing them, perhaps because of their elusive nature.

My references include the book *A Photographic Guide to Mammals of Australia* by Ronald Strahan and the Australian Museum (1997), and these websites: [environment.nsw.gov.au](http://environment.nsw.gov.au), [fauna.com.au](http://fauna.com.au), [wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org).

Photos: Michael Bedingfield



## *Contacts for FOG groups and projects*

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Contact [info@fog.org.au](mailto:info@fog.org.au) or Sarah Sharp (0402 576 412).

**Activities** organises FOG field trips, talks, workshops, on-ground work, support to other groups, property visits and FOG's calendar. *Inquiries:* [activities@fog.org.au](mailto:activities@fog.org.au)

**Advocacy** prepares submissions and advocates on grassy ecosystem issues. It holds occasional meetings and workshops. *Inquiries:* [advocacy@fog.org.au](mailto:advocacy@fog.org.au)

**Committee & correspondence.** The committee organises, coordinates and monitors FOG activities. Members: Sarah Sharp (President), Kris Nash (Secretary), Leon Pietsch (Treasurer), John Fitz Gerald, Naarilla Hirsch, Stephen Horn, Tony Lawson, Ann Milligan (newsletter), Katherina Ng, Margaret Ning, Kim Pullen, Rainer Rehwinkel, Andrew Zelnik.  
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**Grassland flora and other sales.** FOG sells and distributes the book *Grassland Flora*, other books, cards and T-shirts. *Inquiries:* [booksales@fog.org.au](mailto:booksales@fog.org.au)

**Grassland monitoring.** FOG holds monitoring days at the Bush Heritage property 'Scottsdale' near Bredbo, NSW. *Inquiries:* [linda.spinaze@fog.org.au](mailto:linda.spinaze@fog.org.au)

**Hall Cemetery.** FOG with ACT Public Cemeteries Authority holds regular working bees to enhance the natural values of the area of grassy woodland that surrounds Hall Cemetery. *Inquiries:* [john.fitzgerald@fog.org.au](mailto:john.fitzgerald@fog.org.au)

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**Membership.** New members are welcome. We have two new membership categories: \$20 per year for not-for-profit organisations, and a new 'voluntary life membership' category. Membership forms are at the website. *For inquiries, or to help with newsletter dispatch, contact:* [membership@fog.org.au](mailto:membership@fog.org.au)

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**Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park (STEP).** STEP is a regional botanic garden and recovery centre at the National Arboretum Canberra. STEP showcases local ecosystems, especially native grasses and forbs. *Inquiries:* [secretary@step.asn.au](mailto:secretary@step.asn.au), or The Secretary, STEP Inc., PO Box 440, Jamison Centre ACT 2614.

**Website, [www.fog.org.au](http://www.fog.org.au)** The website holds information about FOG and grasslands, back issues of the newsletter, and program details. *Inquiries:* [webmanager@fog.org.au](mailto:webmanager@fog.org.au)

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