



March–April 2016

Important: Annual General Meeting

Tuesday 15 March 6.00 pm Barry Drive, Acton ACT

All financial members of FOG are invited to our Annual General Meeting on Tuesday 15 March at 6 pm at the Conservation Council offices, 26 Barry Drive, Acton ACT.

Come for 5.30 pm so you can catch up with other members beforehand! Afterwards we expect that all or some of us will go to dinner at one of the nearby restaurants.

The agenda for the AGM is included with this newsletter. *Please bring it to the meeting.*

Members may submit motions to be put to the meeting, and must then attend the meeting in person to speak to the motion.

Any financial member of FOG may nominate office bearers and committee members, either before the AGM, in writing – accompanied by written confirmation from the nominee that they accept the nomination – or at the meeting itself.

A very important part of this year's AGM will be the nomination and election of a new President, because Sarah Sharp has declared herself unavailable for the role in 2016. (See page 3 for a summary of the President's role in FOG.)

Motions, valid written nominations and any apologies must reach the Secretary **before Sunday 13 March** to be included in the meeting.

Secretary: john.fitzgerald@fog.org.au

See you at the AGM!



Dr Ken Hodgkinson (centre) telling the FOG group about the grassland plots behind him, on Monday 15 February (see pp. 8–9).

Contents of this issue are listed on p.14.

FOG activities & workparties

Grassland invertebrates, Saturday 5 March

Come and join Kim Pullen, keen entomologist and long-time FOG committee member, as we look for small grassland fauna at **Yarramundi Reach grassland, 10 am till noon**. We will aim to use nets to catch, tweezers to hold, and hand-lenses to identify, insects and possibly other invertebrates in that grassland. No fauna or people should be harmed in this venture.

Meet: 9.55 am at the carpark at the ATSI Cultural Centre, 245 Lady Denman Drive, ACT.

Wear outdoor gear, solid footwear and sun protection.

Bring drinking water, and hand lenses if you have them.

Please email ann.milligan@fog.org.au to say you are coming.

Workparties to support native biodiversity

Sunday 28 February – Stirling Park

9.30 am – 12.30 pm

Our tasks: Cutting and daubing the last woody weeds left at the north end of Stirling Park ridge, and dealing with the heavy weedy growth around the spring. We may also be watering our plantings at the south end, and collecting rubbish.

Meet in Stirling Park, across Alexandrina Drive from the rusty DNA sculpture car park, about half-way between Mariner Place and Hopetoun Crescent. Look for the Friends of Grasslands signs.

Wear gardening clothes and solid footwear, and bring drinking water, sun protection and eye protection.

Contact jamie.pittock@fog.org.au or 0407 265 131 if you intend to come, so there are enough tools and morning tea.

Hot weather: The workparty will automatically be cancelled if the weather forecast the night before is for 35°C or more, or it is a total fire ban day. If the forecast is for more than 30°C the workparty may stop earlier than scheduled.

Saturdays 12 March & 2 April – Hall Cemetery

9 – 11 am

These autumn work mornings are to continue our control of fleshy weeds, especially emerging thistles, and also of selected patches of exotic grass. The major action will be spot application of herbicide through the grassy woodland. Some physical removal can also be done. Morning tea is provided. Please dress for the weather and tall grass.

MOST IMPORTANT – so that enough gear (and morning tea) is on hand to match the enthusiasm of volunteers, REGISTER at least two days in advance, with john.fitzgerald@fog.org.au.

For other events see page 2.

Other events in March–May

Canberra Heritage Festival activities, April

1. ‘Discover our natural treasures’ – four events run by the Conservation Council ACT region

Discover Kama: Tuesday 5 April 7.30 am, Kama Nature Reserve
One of this year’s Canberra Heritage Festival activities is a walk organised by the Conservation Council ACT Region in Kama Nature Reserve.

The walk will last about 2 hours, starting early (7.30 am), and will follow established tracks, with the walkers in small groups (up to 10 people). Group leaders will include FOG members Kat Ng and David Johnson with John Fitz Gerald, as well as members of Canberra Ornithologists Group.

FOG will have *Woodland Flora* available for sale at this event (\$20 for FOG members; \$25 for others).

Kama is in the Belconnen region, on the north-east side of the Molonglo River. David Johnson is doing experimental work on forbs in this grassland, as part of his PhD studies at ANU Fenner School. The area offers plenty of plants of interest, including *Themeda triandra*, and lovely old trees and nest hollows and woody debris; it is moderately weedy in places. We hope the birds will be active early on this morning.

IMPORTANT: This activity will take only 20 people. If you are interested in attending, please **register your interest** with john.fitzgerald@fog.org.au before Easter. John will contact us at the end of March to let us know if there are enough places available for us to join in.

Discover three other natural treasures in ACT

The Conservation Council is also offering the chance to explore aspects of the nature reserves at Mulligans Flat (9 April, 10 am), Kinlyside (14 April, 10 am) and Red Hill (17 April, 10 am).

2. ‘Discovering a forgotten woodland & rediscovering Ngunawal culture’ – run by Molonglo Catchment Group

Field day & barbecue: Saturday 9 April 9.30–12.30, Stirling Park (Block 2 Section 128 Yarralumla – opposite Canberra Yacht Club and Lake Burley Griffin)

Celebrate Ngunawal caring for country and local Landcare Living history, as told by a remnant corner of woodland, a tiny Button Wrinklewort plant and a Ngunawal family who camped on a creek on the side of present-day Capital Hill before the building of Canberra.

Contact: communications@molonglocatchment.org.au

3. **Callum Brae Nature Reserve** – an event run by Greening Australia

Callum Brae Nature Reserve: Saturday 2 April.

Details to come.

More information will be available about these and other events on the website, http://www.environment.act.gov.au/heritage/heritage-and-the-community/heritage_festival or through the organisations running the activities.

Managing your land for the future: resilience and adaptation for climate change

Friday 18 – Saturday 19 March

In the upper Murrumbidgee catchment the climate is changing. Temperature records are regularly broken, seasonal climate patterns are moving and extremes of drought and flood are predicted. Those living on the land or managing land and water resources are dealing with the changes on a daily basis. Managing for adaptation and resilience is essential.

Join land managers, science, government and industry at this forum at Murrumbateman NSW (18 March) and Queanbeyan NSW (19 March), to hear key speakers in the mornings and go on field trips in the afternoons. The forum is run by the Upper Murrumbidgee Catchment Coordinating Committee.

Book: Eventbrite > UMCCC forum

Cost: \$50 for both days or \$30 for one day, all inclusive.

Program and details: www.umccc.org.au

National Seed Science Forum 14–16 March

Mt Annan NSW

Forum registration closes on Monday 29 February

See: <http://www.seedpartnership.org.au/seedscienceforum>

Forum on next generation environment laws

Thursday 24 March, 12 – 2 pm

A public forum reviewing the way nature, wildlife and people are cared for in Australia to see where protection of nature can be improved. One of several being held across Australia.

Place: Alan Barton Forum, ANU College Business & Economics, Kingsley St, Acton ACT.

Details & registration: <http://conservationcouncil.org.au> (scroll down to Upcoming Events, righthand side of the screen).

Community planting at Queanbeyan

Sunday 1 May 9.00 – 12.00

We are invited to help the Molonglo Catchment Group and its members with this planting activity for the Stringybark/Environs Biodiversity Connectivity Project. The project is a consequence of recent environmental offsets related to planned roadworks near Queanbeyan.

Meet at the corner of Bicentennial Drive and Balcombe Street, Jerrabomberra Park.

Wear gardening clothes and sun protection and bring gloves.

More information? Phone Tom Baker, mob 0415 839 017.

Friends of Grasslands Inc. is on Facebook



<https://www.facebook.com/friendsofgrasslands/>

News from the FOG Committee

Diary of FOG involvement in regional natural resources management activities, December 2015 to February 2016

with names of (mostly) committee people organising or attending

Meetings

- Conservation Council BWG January, update on ACT Government's draft Grassland Strategy (Sarah, Naarilla, Ann, Barbara)
- BOB Molonglo tour of walking tracks established, 4 December (Sarah)

Events, workshops, etc., attended representing FOG

- ACT Biodiversity Adaptation Pathways workshop, 30 November (Sarah, John)
- Canberra Nature Map launch of reptile app, 18 January (Sarah, Ann)
- FOG stall at World Wetlands Day open day at Jerrabomberra Wetlands, 7 February (Ann, with Marg, Sarah, Kim)
- Launch of exhibition by Friends of Black Mountain, 19 February (Sarah, Kim, Ann)

Workparties

- Stirling Park 29 November, 28 December, 31 January (Jamie Pittock, Peter McGhie)
- Cooma grassland site mgmt, LLS grant for monitoring, 1 Dec review, 4 Dec site visit, 9 January on site (Marg, Sarah, Andrew, Geoff)
- Submitted final report for grant received from ACT Government, 15 January (Jamie, John, Sarah), site visit with ACT Govt reps, 22 January (Jamie, John, Sarah)

Activities

- FOG end-of-year event at Jerrabomberra Wetlands, 16 December (Activities team)
- FOG visit to grassland experiment plots at Evatt, 15 February (Activities team)

Newsletter and eBulletin

- Newsletter preparation and distribution, 16 December (Ann and helpers)
- eBulletin preparation and distribution, 27 January (Ann)

Advocacy

See separate advocacy report for submission details (Naarilla and advocacy team: Sarah, John, Tony, Jamie, Barbara)

- Discussions with Conservation Council regarding the ACT Government's weed budget (ongoing) (Sarah, Naarilla)

Woodland Flora

- Final version sent to printers 7 December (Sarah)
- 1020 copies provided by Elect Printers, 16 & 23 December
- Packing, posting, delivering copies of *Woodland Flora* and *Grassland Flora*, 16 & 17 December (Barbara, Marg, Leon, Kay, Tony, Phil and Sarah)
- Continuing distribution (Sarah)
- 460 *Woodland Flora* books have been distributed, of which 60 were provided gratis to authors, photographers, steering committee and funding body (Conservation Planning, ACT Government); 79 *Grassland Flora* books have been sold concurrently, during 16 December – 24 February

Proceedings of the FOG grassland forum 2014 <http://www.fog.org.au/forum2014.htm>

- Forum talks etc., edited (Helen Horton, Ann & presenters), laid-out (Ann), and penultimate version compiled and displayed at FOG picnic 16 December (Ann)
- Final files prepared; emailed and mailed to webmaster 17–19 December (Ann) and uploaded to the web before 31 December (Richard)
- After clearance, the last delayed paper was finalised, mailed, and uploaded on 6 February (Ann, Richard)
- All presenters were emailed to alert them the forum papers were online (Ann); wider audience alerted by Twitter (Ann, @watermilli)
- Estimated stats for January 2016: whole forum, over 250 downloads; individual items, over 150 downloads; website 'hits', over 56,000 (Richard).

Welcome to FOG!

We warmly welcome these new members who have recently joined Friends of Grasslands Inc.

Maree Gilbert, of Kambah ACT
Friends of Yass Gorge, of Yass NSW
Dr Ken Hodgkinson, of Evatt ACT
Michelle Storey, of Gundaroo NSW.

FOG advocacy

Naarilla Hirsch

January

ActewAGL released a Vegetation Management Consultation Paper for public comment. FOG was concerned about the impact of the proposed significant increase in minimum clearance distances around electrical infrastructure occurring in the Bushfire Abatement Zone, and urged that smaller clearance distances be used in high conservation value areas or areas supporting threatened species.

February

FOG supported TAMS's proposed nature strip guidelines as long as there is no increase in nutrients or an increase of organic matter entering the drainage system. It also recommended the addition of some more native plants to the list of recommended plants in the guidelines.

The full text of FOG submissions appears on our website.

Membership matters!

If you find a renewal form with this newsletter, your renewal has not yet reached our records. Renewals are due on 1 January for the calendar year.

FOG members receive earliest notice of FOG activities, including: visits to grassland and grassy woodland areas with expert guides; mornings restoring grassy areas and chatting over morning tea (which FOG provides); the mid-winter afternoon of talks and 'slides'; the end-of-year picnic in December; and the AGM in March. FOG members can join FOG's subgroups, such as for advocacy. Members get the newsletter promptly as soon as it is published, every two months (it's two months old when it reaches the website).

News from the FOG Committee continued

Nominations called for new President and committee members

As indicated on page 1, Sarah is standing down as President. The current committee is therefore calling for nominations for this role, and also invites other FOG members to join us on the committee. Some information is provided here to help you decide if you would like to join us. We would love it if you did!

President roles

The rules state that the president will:

1. Chair AGM, committee meetings, and other meetings of FOG, and oversee the preparation of agenda and minutes for formal meetings. (Note that some of these duties may be delegated.)
2. Act as spokesperson for FOG, represent FOG at meetings/forums, and sign correspondence and submissions (may be delegated).
3. Ensure that the committee and activities of FOG are effective, that the newsletter/eBulletin, program, correspondence and submissions are done to a high standard and consistent with FOG's objectives, values and policies (shared with the committee).
4. Show leadership, encourage membership participation, and seek decision making with respect and by consensus wherever possible. Show respect for the views and opinions of all (potential) stakeholders (shared with the committee).

In other words, the President has an overseeing role for all of FOG's activities, liaisons and memberships, with some representation and follow-ups shared with other committee members. Other tasks/roles can be filled by the President or delegated to other committee members, including representing FOG at meetings or in other fora with other groups and government, depending on interests, time and expertise.

We welcome anyone to consider joining us on the committee, to become more involved in the many sides of FOG. We especially would love to welcome someone with the skills listed above who would consider nominating for President. You certainly don't need to be knowledgeable about the ecology of grassy ecosystems; just someone with the skills to direct the group.

Please email Sarah on president@fog.org.au to discuss this further. For more information on how the committee and the FOG organisation works, go to the website, <http://www.fog.org.au/statement.pdf>.

Draft Minutes of the FOG AGM, March 2015

Meeting opened 18:03.

1. Attendance and apologies

Attendance: Sarah Sharp, Leon Pietsch, Stephen Horn, Kim Pullen, Andrew Zelnik, Andy Russell, Barbara Payne, Janet Russell, Isobel Crawford, Michael Bedingfield, Kay Pietsch, Margaret Ning, Geoff Robertson, Paul Archer, David Crawford, Ross Dennis, Ann Milligan, John Fitz Gerald (minutes).

Apologies: Linda Spinaze, Helen Elliott, Naarilla Hirsch, Kat Ng, Cathy Robertson, Kris Nash, Tony Lawson, Juliey Beckman, Kathryn Wells, Rainer Rehwinkel, John Buckley.

2. Minutes of 2014 AGM

Minutes accepted after two corrections to attendance list, moved Stephen Horn, seconded Isobel Crawford.

3. Matters arising out of these minutes

- (a) Membership fee review – Fee held unchanged since primary operational cost (newsletter) was being adequately covered.
- (b) Storage of gmail correspondence – Secretary arranges for electronic storage as .pdf files.
- (c) Guidelines for reimbursement of expenses – not developed – to become an item of business for new committee.
- (d) 'Woodland Flora' – not completed but progressing steadily.

4. President's report (note items 4, 5 and 6 are documented as a report file circulated to the meeting)

Notes of particular importance:

- Special thanks to all four departing committee members.
- Forum – declared a great success with fine response from speakers and delegates. Proceedings remain to be compiled.
- Workparties and activities – a busy year with an average of two per month.
- Cross membership with many other organisations and NGOs felt highly significant to the important interactions across the ecological community.

Report accepted – moved Margaret Ning, seconded Janet Russell.

Geoff Robertson thanked Sarah for her commitment and distinctive style in president's role.

5. Treasurer's Report

Details given fully in written report though no summary table of accounts tabled. Treasurer explained the new sub-account framework that committee has found very useful for analysis ongoing financial situation and provided some notes about accrual accounting now used.

News from the FOG Committee continued

Draft AGM Minutes 2015, continued from page 3

Summary is that FOG remains in a healthy financial state with a surplus for the year of \$3,008.

Report accepted – moved Leon Pietsch, seconded Isobel Crawford.

Comment was raised that FOG is in such a healthy state that the organisation should think hard about using some of the uncommitted funds to further FOG's environmental objectives. Discussion followed that any such spending needs to be wisely directed and the new Committee was tasked to take this on.

6. Reports from Groups and Projects

Circulated reports were taken as written and comments or clarifications invited.

Stephen Horn questioned whether FOG could expand the horizons of the places it commonly visits and works in. Discussion followed about how to keep projects running over time with a finite resource of member contributions. Old Cooma Common was raised as one example that regrettably is effectively phased out as a FOG work site. Again the new Committee is urged to spend time thinking laterally about how to manage this aspect of FOG's objectives, possibly without physical presence of members being committed, but certainly without over-commitment. Analysis might be summarised: 'where is FOG, what is it doing, how is it doing it?'

7. Proposed changes to the Constitution

Motions to change the Constitution had been circulated prior to the AGM. These arose since FOG's 2014 application to become a Registered Environmental Organisation was not accepted:

- Revised clauses 34 and 35 to the Constitution were recommended to the meeting. If passed this would allow FOG to accept tax deductible donations.
- To accept the proposed changes required the agreement of three-quarters of the members present at the AGM.

The motion was put and agreed unanimously.

8. Annual elections

Andrew Russell was appointed Returning Officer, declared all committee positions vacant and called for nominations.

Ann Milligan and Margaret Ning nominated Sarah Sharp as President. She accepted on the condition that FOG operate with two Vice Presidents to help run meetings and take other responsibilities. Therefore election was held until the meeting considered the Vice President positions.

For Vice President, Sarah Sharp nominated Ann Milligan, seconded Barbara Payne.

Kim Pullen self-nominated and was seconded by Andrew Zelnik. These two were declared elected Vice Presidents.

This matter being resolved, Sarah Sharp was elected as President.

Sarah Sharp and Barbara Payne nominated John Fitz Gerald as Secretary and he was elected.

Leon Pietsch was nominated as Treasurer by Margaret Ning and Andrew Zelnik, and he was elected.

The following were nominated as Committee members, either by acceptance from the floor of the meeting or by having consented to nomination by writing to the President ahead of time: Ann Milligan, Margaret Ning, Andrew Zelnik, Naarilla Hirsch, Kat Ng, Tony Lawson, Paul Archer, David Crawford and Ross Dennis. All were duly declared elected since FOG Rules allow for up to eleven ordinary members to sit on Committee.

9. Appointment of Public Officer

Andrew Russell was proposed as Public Officer by Sarah Sharp and seconded by Andrew Zelnik for the position and the meeting approved wholeheartedly.

10. Other Motions with notice

No motions had been received.

The meeting finished at 19:32.



The FOG committee ran a stall at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Open Day, 7 February. Here Sarah Sharp is on duty.



Kim Pullen was one of FOG's representatives at the launch of the Friends of Black Mountain exhibition 'Black Mountain Nature Reserve: a special place' on 19 February at the Australian National Botanic Gardens Visitors Centre.

News from the committee continued

Old Cooma Common Grassland Reserve grant application

Margaret Ning

Between 2000 and 2012, FOG used to undertake working bees to control weeds at Old Cooma Common Grassland Reserve (OCCGR) in southern NSW. Although our work ceased several years ago, we are reluctant to see the condition of OCCGR deteriorate to the level of most of the surrounding countryside, with ever-encroaching St John's Wort (SJW) (*Hypericum perforatum*) and African Lovegrass (ALG) (*Eragrostis curvula*), especially given their threat to the populations of the Monaro Golden Daisy (MGD) (*Rutidosis leiolepis*) that grow at OCCGR and two nearby sites.

We therefore sought grant funding to pay contractors to continue our earlier fight against the weeds.

As reported briefly in the January–February 2016 *News of Friends of Grasslands*, FOG has recently secured a \$32,000 grant from NSW Local Land Services (LLS) to cover various weed reduction activities on OCCGR, on Crown Land to the north of the Common, and on the Firing Range over the road to the south of the Common. The grant runs for three years, from late 2015 to late 2018. Populations of the MGD grow at all three sites, within natural grassland, but they are threatened by invading weeds, especially SJW and ALG. (The photo, courtesy of Cooma-Monaro Shire Council, shows signs at OCCGR.)

We aim to contract-out spraying of SJW and ALG; to monitor the weed populations and MGD annually; and to conduct three field days. We intend to undertake best practice weed management for these weeds and to document and communicate the results. Our results will be demonstrated at the field days and published in reports to LLS, in the FOG newsletter and in the Cooma print media.

Like all grant applications, the securing of the grant took some time, with several levels of applications involving a number of people. The satisfying news that we had been successful with our application came in September 2015, although there were still some documents to prepare after that. This project involves a high degree of cooperative work. Luke Pope of the LLS and Brett Jones of Cooma-Monaro Shire Council will provide on-going assistance with organising and liaising with contractors for the spraying, and with conducting the field days later on.

We began the monitoring program before the start of the weed control, and mapped the populations of the MGD. The monitoring methods were developed with Rainer Rehwinkel to be consistent with those used by NSW Office of Environment and Heritage for monitoring weeds and threatened species. The monitoring will be repeated every year at the same time.

The initial monitoring was done in early January 2016. Three transects on the Common (SJW x 2 and MGD x 1) and three on the Firing Range (SJW x 1, MGD x 1 and ALG x 1) were established and measured. When surveying the northern Crown Land site we saw very little obvious MGD or SJW, but that site has been continually grazed for many years, which may account for the difficulty in locating our target species. Another visit will be paid to the site at a more promising time.

In the second week of February, this year's spraying began. For best practice, our main concern is to take care to prevent overspraying, and also to ensure all the weeds are treated. I have discussed our strategy with the contractors, and explained that we would like them to pursue the SJW and ALG from a closer range than they may normally do things. They know that we realise the job will take longer if this care is taken, thus costing more,



but we wish to demonstrate that better outcomes will be achieved as a result. We shall spend nearly half of the total spraying budget in this first year in an attempt to hit the SJW and ALG hard, prioritising the areas where the MGD is present. The amounts spent on contractors will be reduced in each of the following years, as fewer weeds recover. Our aim is to demonstrate the outcomes against the budget, enabling a cost-benefit analysis – the benefit being protection of the threatened species and other grassland flora, and significant reduction in the threatening weeds.

Once we have something to communicate to the world, we shall conduct our first field day.

We still have a long way to go with this project, and we would love to hear from FOG members who would like to be involved with future monitoring and field days.

No specific skills are required, just a wish to be part of an enthusiastic team of fellow volunteers.

Please contact me (mob. 0427 788 304).



Margaret Ning and tame Bearded Dragon 'friend' helped run the FOG display stall on 7 February at Jerrabomberra Wetlands Open Day.
Photo: Mandy Conway.

News roundup

Achievements continue at Hall Cemetery

John Fitz Gerald

Our four work mornings during 2015 in the grassy woodland block surrounding Hall Cemetery have involved in total around 70 volunteer-hours. Continuing the trend of recent years, little effort has been needed for large woody weeds: a few tenacious Briar Roses and Hawthorns were the exceptions. Instead, control has focused on fleshy weeds including various Thistles, Plantain, Cleavers and Capeweed, via both physical removal and application of herbicide. The persistence of the Cleavers is particularly annoying.

In addition we have further pushed back the areas of exotic grasses by attacks on Phalaris, Perennial Rye and Tall Fescue, but this is a big job. The exotic grass flowering was huge in 2015, including the species above together with Yorkshire Fog, Giant Brome and Sweet Vernal, so a lot of new germination is likely in future years.



Above: *Bursaria* (green) in the grassy woodland near the gate of Hall Cemetery, ACT, where the team has whippersnipped the long grass in spring. Right: Blue Devils *Eryngium ovinum* on the highway side of the cemetery area. Both photos were taken in late January 2016.



We regularly maintain the areas under our steadily growing *Bursarias* (e.g. photo at left), to keep the groundcover low.

Hall Cemetery has become one of the sites specified in the fantastic Canberra Nature Map website and mobile phone app. By mid-Feb 2016, over 88 sightings of species of native plants, fungi, birds, frogs and reptiles were listed for this location ... and spiders and insects including moths were yet to be added!

Stirling Park, Yarralumla, in summer

Jamie Pittock

Braving the heat of summer, FOG volunteers have been hard at work in the past two months restoring Stirling Park. In late December, a sturdy band of people watered the trees planted over the last two years, to ensure that they survived the limited rain until that point. A few volunteers returned a few days later to cut & daub and spray weeds missed in previous efforts on the western and northern ends of the ridge. In particular, St John's Wort outliers were targeted for spraying.

On 31 January, 13 FOG volunteers gathered at Attunga Point on the shores of Lake Burley Griffin to re-weed this important site for Button Wrinklewort *Rutidosia leptorrhynchoides*. FOG weeded this site in 2009, and it was pleasing to see how little the fenced area had been re-infested in the intervening years. We were able to push out the boundary of the weeded area to cover the disturbed land between Attunga Point and the main area of Stirling Park. A veneer of weed trees along the shoreline of the lake await sufficient funding for their safe removal. Our



Andrew Zelnik removing the invasive wattle *Acacia boormanii* cut out during cutting & daubing work at Attunga Point on 31 January 2016. Lake Burley Griffin is in the background.

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News roundup continued – Stirling Park in summer, continued

enthusiastic labour also enabled removal of the modest weed regrowth in some previously worked areas of the adjacent area of Stirling Park.

We are making great progress in removing woody weeds at Stirling Park and hope to complete the first cut-over of the area at the workparty on 28 February. Sadly it has been bountiful growing season for African Lovegrass, Blackberry and St John's Wort, and further effort is needed by land managers to spray these weeds.

Three FOG representatives met with Malcolm Snow, Chief Executive, and Peter Beutel, Manager of the National Estate for the National Capital Authority (NCA), on 9 February to discuss the conservation of ecologically significant national lands. The NCA has provided a further, and welcome, \$6000 in 2016 to support FOG's conservation activities on national lands. FOG welcomes the NCA's ongoing management activities, including a timely revision of the 2009 ecological management plan for these lands. Priorities for future environmental work were discussed. FOG also expressed its concern that the recent revision of the National Capital Plan failed to improve the protection afforded the natural heritage values of these lands despite FOG's submission. The NCA officers explained the Authority's intention to undertake a further, finer-scale planning process in 2016 which would consider development controls at Stirling Park.

In January, FOG also acquitted a \$6000 grant for 2014–15 from the ACT Regional Delivery of the National Landcare Program administered by the ACT Environment and Planning Directorate, titled 'Restoration of Grassy Ecosystems and Endangered Species Habitat in Central Canberra'. These funds enabled FOG to significantly enhance weed control and revegetate strategic areas at Yarramundi Reach and Stirling Park. Monitoring at Yarramundi Reach and Stirling Park shows an ongoing reduction in woody weed cover but mixed results for herbaceous weeds. FOG contributed nearly \$21,000 in volunteer labour to the project; nearly \$50,000 was contributed in management activities by the NCA and Rural Fire Service. FOG thanks the ACT Environment and Planning Directorate for their strategic support.



Stirling Park, mid-February 2016, across the road from Attunga Point. Two views of the understorey, with Lake Burley Griffin just visible in the distance in the lower photo.

FOG visit to Croke Place, Evatt, 15 February 2016

Ann Milligan



On a warm lazy-feeling Monday afternoon in late summer, 18 members and friends of grasslands, accompanied by one very small well-behaved lass in-arms, assembled at Croke Place to visit the grassland restoration trial run by Dr Ken Hodgkinson with the North Belconnen Landcare Group.

In the shady carpark, Ken gave us a short introduction to the aims of the trial and the burning and mowing treatments (and reseeding, til that was made inviable by drought). Then we walked along the path towards the Lake Ginninderra dam wall, turning off before reaching it. There, running up the slope between an old track (now rich in weed grasses) and William Webb Drive, we found posts marking five very different rectangles of native grassland. These plots (Ken is pointing them out in the photo, left), originated around 8 years ago as a demonstration, but Ken is now measuring the treatment effects.

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News roundup continued – FOG visit to Croke Place, Evatt, continued

You can read about the trial and the results to the end of 2014 in Ken's spoken presentation published at www.fog.org.au > [forum proceedings](#).

The plots are astonishingly different. Ken sent us all off to walk along the plot boundaries (photo, right) to see if we could identify which treatment had been applied to each plot. That was not an easy task, I found!

The no-treatment plot looked overfull, with thick vegetation above knee-high. The autumn-burn plot and low-mow plot were the best looking, and the spring-burn and high-mow plots looked in intermediate condition – at this visit, anyway. There was Kangaroo Grass *Themeda triandra* in flower in both the burnt plots, while the low-mow (as low as possible) and high-mow (to ~15 cm above ground) plots were green.

Ken said that his aim ultimately was to find a way to restore Canberra's grasslands to high floristic richness, with many different flora species – so people can enjoy them. Apparently this trial is succeeding in doing that because he is finding most native forbs – such as Blue Devils *Eryngium ovinum*, Bulbine Lilies *Bulbine bulbosa* and native Plantain *Plantago varia* in the autumn-burnt plot. It also has fewest weeds, especially uplope – some *Vulpia*, *Briza minor* and *Avena fatua* Wild Oats. Some of the native forbs in the burnt plots are not found at all in the mown or control plots, and would probably die out here if there was no burning being done.

Karissa Preuss, Landcare Coordinator for Ginninderra Catchment Group (GCG) (the plots are close to Ginninderra Creek), explained to the group that this trial was the first stage in a larger trial that GCG initiated to find ways to restore the native grasslands of this catchment. The message coming from these plots, about the value of autumn burning, is now about to be trialled further in a series of different grassland locations along the creek. I hope we shall hear more about that initiative.

Thank you, Ken, for a most interesting visit.



Top: We wander among the plots. Below: Spring burn (left), low mow (middle) and autumn burn (right), with no treatment beyond, at distant right. House roofs are on the far side of William Webb Drive.

End-of-year picnic at Jerrabomberra Wetlands, 16 December 2015

Lucky we were able to have this end-of-year 'picnic' under cover (with a portable barbecue for those who needed it) at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands office! There was heavy (but welcome) rain for the first hour or more, upsetting the schedule of walks to the bird hides. However, several people went out and explored later, after the rain, before dark.

This was a very cheerful informal gathering of ~30 FOG members and guests. The newsletter was packed and stamped for postage by a chatty group of record-large size, who then joined in the general munching and conversation.



It was an opportunity to informally 'launch' the first print run of *Woodland Flora*. FOG provided champagne and finger food; Sarah said a few words (see photos); and of the (literally) hot-off-the-press copies she had brought with her,

none was left for her to take home! Imminent online publication of the FOG Forum (2014) Proceedings was also flagged. The evening was so pleasant we plan to run a similar event this year.

News roundup continued

New & emerging weed updates – as reported by weeds officers Jenny Conolly & Steve Taylor, Dec 2015

Sarah Sharp (FOG representative on the Weeds Advisory Group)

Mexican Feathergrass

- Mexican Feathergrass was found at Fraser Primary School and approximately 200 m away on suburban nature strips and adjacent parkland by a former ACT Government weeds officer.
- Control measures are highly labour intensive and require good hygiene, including removal of plants, mulch and the soil seed bank, with double bagging of removed materials and deep burial at the Mugga Lane Resource Management Centre.
- Follow-up control will be required for at least 5–6 years based on likely longevity of the soil seed bank.



Ammobium alatum

- This species of daisy is native to the Southern Highlands and other areas of NSW but not the ACT.
- Plants have been found along Mugga Lane towards the entrance to the Resource Management Centre and seed was most likely spread off the back of a trailer. Plants in flower are being pulled up.
- One plant detected in the long grass adjacent to Majura Road was removed.



Bridal Creeper

- Five Bridal Creeper plants were detected on the edge of the Barton Highway adjacent to the Gold Creek village.
- Plants were hand pulled and sprayed and follow-up will need to occur for 5–6 years.

Madagascan Fireweed

- Control activities in Crace and Forde continue to be successful in containing and suppressing imported-turf-related incursions, due to an excellent contractor and Jenny Conolly's efforts identifying and removing seedlings before they flower. Note that seedlings can come into flower within a few weeks after emergence. Control activities will need to continue at these sites for at least 5 years.
- Madagascan Fireweed has also been detected in imported turf in Coombs and Charnwood and may also come into the ACT with nursery plants and stockfeed. Imports from the Bega Valley are a potential source of contamination. Pathways for incursion need to be blocked.
- No more Madagascan Fireweed plants have been detected along Mugga Way.



Alligator Weed

- Established populations are currently being treated at Isabella Pond, Lake Ginninderra and Lake Burley Griffin.
- Alligator Weed in Yerrabi Pond has been treated for 8 years to reduce the weed to single stems.



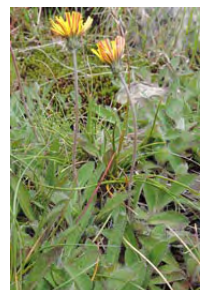
Ox-eye Daisy

- An incursion was detected inside the ACT border on the Kings Highway and the plants were pulled by hand.
- A ranger detected incursions at Mt Gingera and Mt Ginini and pulled the plants by hand.
- NSW has advised that eradication is achievable for this species because unlike most daisies the seed is not spread by wind.
- Also occurs at Lake George and two areas in Wamboin.



Hawkweed deployment

- Five ACT Parks and Conservation Service staff went to Kosciuszko National Park to participate in a foot search for Mouse-ear Hawkweed in known infested areas in collaboration with NSW NPWS. The goal of the program is to eradicate the Mouse-ear Hawkweed incursion from the main range.
- Mouse-ear Hawkweed has been detected previously in the ACT at Nursery Swamp but no plants were found during monitoring this year. Incursion is most likely in the ACT along high-use walking tracks.



Photos are used with permission. They are from http://www.tams.act.gov.au/parks-conservation/plants_and_animals/Biosecurity/weeds except for the two photos of *Ammobium alatum* which are on Canberanaturemap.org (*top*, courtesy of Don Wood; *lower*, courtesy of Michael Mulvaney).

Vale Benj Whitworth

It was with much sadness that we learned on Saturday 20 February that Benj had passed away at the very young age of 41. Benj was a passionate advocate for conservation, and, amongst other significant contributions, as an active member of FOG he for some years helped facilitate changes to the status of grasslands in the ACT and inspired others to care deeply for this poorly protected environment. Over the past years he became less involved as his illness restricted him more.

To quote from the *Canberra Times* notice:

'Benj was well known around Canberra with his love of native plants, trees, birds, grasslands and The Pinnacle. He died peacefully at his place when his heart finally gave up. Gone too soon at 41.'

A celebration of Benj's life will be held at Crosbie Morrison Amphitheatre, Australian National Botanic Gardens, 12.30pm, Friday 26 February 2016. Please bring a picnic rug or something to sit on.'

Sarah Sharp

In memory of Benj

I met Benj about 18 years ago. He was a passionate young man loving all things in nature and who had a great knowledge of the natural world. He was then a bird keeper which may have sparked his wider interest. Having kept birds myself, I felt that this gave me some insight into him.

Recognising his passion, knowledge, social interaction and organising ability I quickly enticed him to join the Friends of Grasslands Committee – it didn't require much effort. He became an active FOG member attending many events, contributing to all aspects of FOG, organising events and challenging those around him to think about the deeper issues of conservation, sometimes taking us beyond our comfort zone.

Benj always lived with his dicky heart and he endured long periods when he was not well and had to undergo medical procedures. Even when he was well, he was aware that his heart could let him down or limit his activities. Benj did not allow this to stop him leading a full life.

When he became more fully involved in Field Nats, being President of that organisation for many years, he applied his skills and energy in that group and always sought to work with FOG by organising combined FOG and Field Nats events.

My mum always said that only the good die young. I don't know where this saying comes from but it is true in Benj Whitworth's case. Thank you Benj for all the good that you have done. We will miss you.

Benj put his professionalism as an ecologist into action through membership of FNAC, Friends of Grasslands and COG but these involvements were based on love of and respect for 'the bush' that began in childhood. The natural history that Benj learned from the outdoors, and The Pinnacle in particular, was regularly shared and often informed his comments and submissions about land management in local reserves.

Geoff Robertson

Advertisements

NSW properties for sale

'Twin Rivers' is on Tuross Road, Nimmitabel, NSW. The property's 225 acres is mostly bush, with approx. 5 acres cleared around the dwelling (see photo below). The environment is native bush with abundant wildlife, including platypus.

The property includes:

- approx. 1 km Tuross River frontage,
- a one-bedroom hut with separate kitchen and living room,
- a large shed,
- telephone and electricity connections.

'Twin Rivers' is 45 minutes from Cooma on a good all-weather road. Asking price: \$250,000 negotiable.

Contact Inga Fritsche on phone 0477 205 317.



'Alma' is a 1068-acre property near Wellington, NSW. It has 350 acres of White Box Grassland and 718 acres of high quality bushland. There is a conservation covenant on the bush, as well as a corridor along the creek. There is an attractive 4-bedroom house with extensive verandahs and a 10 m pool.

The grasslands consist of a diverse swathe of native grasses, including Warrego Summer Grass, Red Grass, Queensland Blue Grass, Silky

Browntop, Common Wheat Grass, *Danthonia*, *Microlaena*, *Poa*, *Stipa*, Hairy Panic, Cotton Panic and more. There are native forbs such as *Glycine*, *Goodenia* and Vanilla Lilies. The bushland comprises Tumbledown Gum, White Box, Grey Box, Red Gum, Ironbark, Kurrajong and Cypress, black and white. There is a significant understorey of shrubs, orchids and flannel flowers. Along the creek are magnificent *Angophora* (Apple Box).

A little over 4 hours from Canberra and 5 hours from Sydney. Price \$660,000 negotiable. Available through Peter Dwyer, at Peter Milling and Co., phone 0418 266 523.

Panic?? Yes, Hairy Panic!

John Fitz Gerald

The photo at right is of *Panicum effusum* Hairy Panic, which is seeding prolifically in many places at this time of year.

The image is a collection of 4 spikelets, each carrying two florets, a pattern characteristic of this grass. Note that these spikelets were cut from their inflorescences and arranged for this photo. The stem of each inflorescence is about 40 cm long, carries a few hundred florets, and detaches as a rigid structure when mature and dry so that seeds are readily blown about by wind.

You may have heard in the last few days that at Wangaratta in Victoria the Hairy Panic has boomed this summer, and some homes have been troubled by huge banks of its seed heads piling up against doors and fences. See: <http://www.bordermail.com.au/story/3739376/hairy-panic-strikes-photos/?cs=2452>

The photo was taken at the Seedbank of the Australian National Botanic Gardens. The white scale bar (at the bottom right of the image) represents 1 mm.



Photo: John Fitz Gerald ©ANBG

Dunedoo Woodland Learning Centre

Naarilla Hirsch

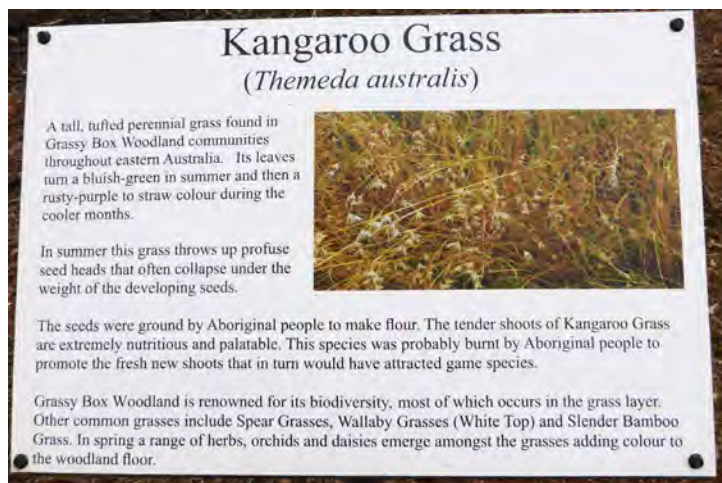
On the way back from the Pilliga in early spring last year, I came across the Dunedoo Woodland Learning Centre, next to the cemetery just outside Dunedoo east of Dubbo. This is an area of Box–Gum woodland remnant that was formerly a Travelling Stock Reserve. The site was protected and developed as a learning centre through a cooperative project involving the local community, the shire council, Landcare, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Greening Australia and several others, with Natural Heritage Trust assistance. The theme expressed is ‘People and Nature: Educating, Conserving and Balancing’.

There is a 2 km track through the reserve, with a wealth of informative signs along the track. The signs include information about the tree species in the reserve, vegetation classification, common and rare woodland birds, woodland mammals and reptiles, and Aboriginal plant use.

Trees in the reserve include Yellow Box *Eucalyptus mellidora*, White Box *E. albens*, Grey Box *E. macrocarpa*, Blakely’s Red Gum *E. blakelyi* and Rough Apple Bark *Angophora floribunda*. When I was there on a short visit in early September, the White Box was flowering, as was *Senna artemisioides* and *Cryptandra amara*. Forbs in flower included *Vittidinia* spp., *Stackhousia monogyna*, *Craspedia variabilis*, *Chrysocephalum apiculatum*, *Bulbine bulbosa*, *Ajuga australis* and *Asperula conferta*.

I managed an even shorter visit on the way back from Brisbane a few weeks later, when more was in flower. There were more daisies (including *Xerochrysum viscosum*), a couple of species of *Goodenia*, and *Wahlenbergia*, *Lomandra filiformis*, *Diuris sulphurea* and a few other forbs I was unable to identify. I’m sure a longer stop would have revealed more.

If you are going up past Dubbo, a stop at this little reserve is well worthwhile.



Top: The reserve in early September. Below: One of the signs.

Photos: Naarilla Hirsch

Bush Stone-curlew *Burhinus grallarius*, a nocturnal ground dwelling bird

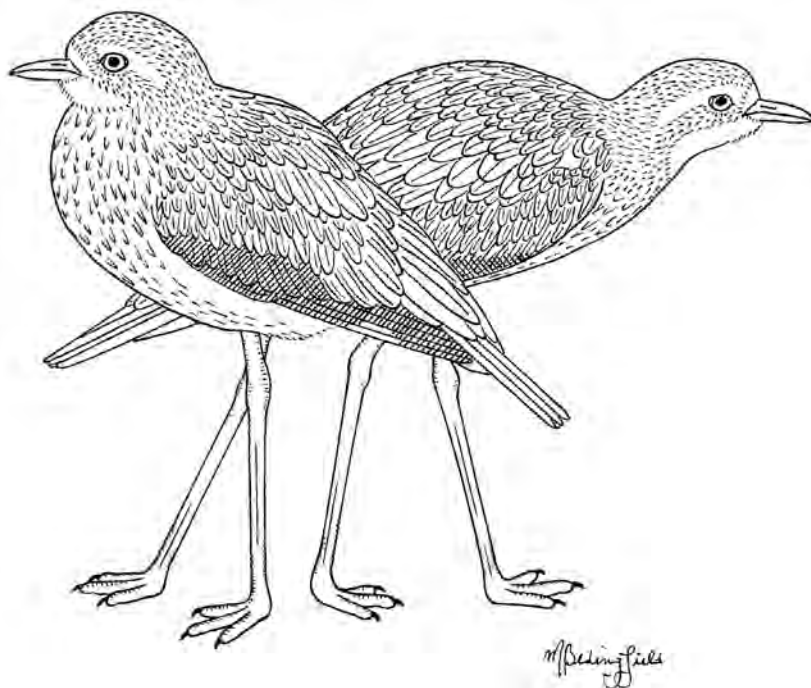
Michael Bedingfield

Bush Stone-curlews were once distributed throughout Australia but their range has been reduced significantly since European settlement. They are ground dwelling birds that like a spacious habitat, such as Box–Gum grassy woodlands, grassy plains and open forest. They are large, with a wingspan of 55–60 cm, and are also nocturnal, feeding mainly on small animals of all kinds, such as insects, spiders, molluscs, frogs and lizards, and less often seeds and tubers. During the day they are usually inactive, sheltering among vegetation. More often heard than seen, their presence is recognised by their eerie drawn-out call of 'wer-loo', usually done at night. Their feathers are mottled and streaked with brown, black, grey and cream colours, with male and female being quite similar. This plumage makes them hard to see when standing motionless in tall grass or crouching on the ground in dappled shade, and this is a major ploy for protection from predators. They seem reluctant to fly, and when approached their habit is to walk away stealthily with head down, and if pressed they will fly away a short distance. They nest in a small cleared space on the bare ground.

Although common in the north of Australia, they are listed as endangered in New South Wales. Locally they are extinct in the wild, having last been seen in Canberra in the 1970s. The main reasons for this are changes to their natural habitat and the introduction of foxes and cats.

When we look at the reasons for the decline of particular animals, the superficial causes may be similar to this case. But looking back in time we see there are more universal reasons. When Britain colonised Australia the industrial revolution was gaining momentum in Europe but world population was still relatively low, approaching one billion. With the improving farming methods the production of food became easier and populations expanded. At that time empire building was very popular and the Europeans sought to increase their wealth and influence by creating colonies and exploiting the abundance of other continents. There seemed to be an unlimited supply of natural resources in the far-flung places of the globe. The new colonies grew rapidly and the numbers of people increased everywhere. Along with this expansion and labour saving machines, industries became more and more productive. At the same time, the landscape was being transformed by the expansion of agriculture, forestry and towns, to feed and house the growing populations, leaving an ever-decreasing amount of land for the wild creatures. In the natural world, species' populations fluctuate with the seasons and living conditions. But with advances in technology and medicine our numbers have increased continually and there are now over seven billion people on Earth.

During the twentieth century economics developed as a social science and became a prominent political tool. With it evolved the idea that a good economy is one that is constantly growing. Nowadays whenever our economy is not growing there is great concern. If there is a downturn and our economy shrinks it



is called a recession and is regarded as a major problem. This attitude is common throughout the world. Poorer countries are constantly trying to catch up with the wealthier ones, which in turn compete with each other to be near the top. Such a philosophy inevitably leads to the need for more and more resources – more land, water, energy, trees and mines. But the planet is finite in size and the world's resources are not unlimited. This continuous growth has come at a great expense. As rapidly as our population and prosperity have grown, biodiversity has gone downwards and species are frequently becoming extinct.

It is wonderful thing to have children and raise a family. It is an essential part of life. And it is only natural for people to want to live in comfort and increasing prosperity. But our own comfort and prosperity, and the number of children we have, are inevitably at the expense of the wellbeing of the wild animals and plants. So it is an extremely difficult issue. There are very few of us who would choose the safety, comfort and abundance of other living creatures ahead of our own. How do you convince seven billion people to do so?

I did the drawing of the Bush Stone-curlews from photos I took at the National Zoo and Aquarium. There is also an experiment at Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve where some birds are successfully living in the protective enclosure there. This is very satisfying. So too are many of the things FOG has achieved. However, as long as the two trends of increasing population and continuous economic growth persist then FOG will have work to do and new challenges.

References

Readers Digest Complete Book of Australian Birds (1976; many authors);
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_population;
<http://www.mulligansflat.org.au/reintroductions.html>;
<http://australianmuseum.net.au/bush-stone-curlew>

Contacts for FOG groups and projects

Refer to the website, www.fog.org.au, for more information

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Promoting wider knowledge of grassy landscapes

Publications: For *Woodland Flora*, *Grassland Flora* & other
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linda.spinaze@fog.org.au

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Yarramundi Reach & Stirling Park, jamie.pittock@fog.org.au

Old Cooma Common, NSW, margaret.ning@fog.org.au

Education: Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park (STEP)
at National Arboretum Canberra: secretary@step.asn.au

Activities: activities@fog.org.au

Media spokesperson: Sarah Sharp (0402 576 412)

Activities by FOG or FOG-related, late February – May

| Date | Activity | Contact |
|---------------|---|---|
| Sun 28 Feb | Stirling Park workparty | jamie.pittock@fog.org.au |
| Sat 5 March | Grassland invertebrates activity | ann.milligan@fog.org.au |
| Sat 12 March | Hall Cemetery workparty | john.fitzgerald@fog.org.au |
| Tues 15 March | FOG Annual General Meeting | john.fitzgerald@fog.org.au <i>before Sunday 13 March</i> |
| Sat 2 April | Hall Cemetery workparty | john.fitzgerald@fog.org.au |
| Tues 5 April | 7.30am Heritage Festival walk in Kama Nature Reserve (a Conservation Council event with FOG input) | john.fitzgerald@fog.org.au |
| Sun 1 May | Stirling Park workparty | jamie.pittock@fog.org.au |
| Sun 1 May | Molonglo Catchment Group community planting, Queanbeyan | Tom Baker by phone |

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– FOG visit to Croke Place, Evatt, 15 February 2016

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Bush Stone-curlew *Burhinus grallarius*, *Michael Bedingfield*

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