



# News of Friends of Grasslands

Supporting native grassy ecosystems

ISSN18526315

September & October 2022

## Events

Fri 9 Sep 10am -12.30pm

**Tour of Ginninderry Conservation corridor** – hosted by the Ginninderry Conservation Trust.

Register: [margaret.ning@fog.org.au](mailto:margaret.ning@fog.org.au)

Thurs & Fri 29-30 Sep

**CSU Wagga Wagga grasslands forum and field day**

Info: [Geoff.robertson@fog.org.au](mailto:Geoff.robertson@fog.org.au)

Sun 16 Oct

**Picnic for nature**

Register: [Andrew.zelnik@fog.org.au](mailto:Andrew.zelnik@fog.org.au)

Sat 22 Oct

**Tallagandra Lane Sutton** – orchid walk to a member's property.

Register: [margaret.ning@fog.org.au](mailto:margaret.ning@fog.org.au)

Sun 30 Oct 2-4.30pm

**Flea-bog Flat, Bruce spring walk**

Register: [fleabogflat@hotmail.com](mailto:fleabogflat@hotmail.com)

## Work Parties

**Budjan Galindji (Franklin Grassland)**

1 & 22 Sep, 5 & 26 Oct

Wednesdays 9-11.30am

Register: [margaret.ning@fog.org.au](mailto:margaret.ning@fog.org.au)

**Gurubang Dhauru (Stirling Park & Yarramundi Reach)**

18 Sep, 23 Oct (& Yarramundi reach)

Sundays 9am -12.30pm

Register: [jamie.pittock@fog.org.au](mailto:jamie.pittock@fog.org.au)

**Top Hut TSR**

Sunday 25 Sep 10am

Register: [margaret.ning@fog.org.au](mailto:margaret.ning@fog.org.au)

**Hall Cemetery**

Saturday 1 October 9-11am

Register: [john.fitzgerald@fog.org.au](mailto:john.fitzgerald@fog.org.au)

*The latest updates are found on our website at [Calendar](#)*

## New Members

Welcome to ...

Matt Whitting ACT

Francis Joseph Horacek

Jennipher Dunstan NSW

Aaron Midson ACT

## From the President ...

My heart sinks every time I pass a high conservation value grassland or grassy woodland site infested with African Lovegrass or one of the other invasive grasses of the ecological apocalypse. I ask 'Why isn't someone doing something to manage this habitat better?'

So, who is 'someone'? Like most Australians I expect that our government's land management agencies will fulfil their responsibilities and undertake good practice conservation actions. We know that ACT, NSW and Federal Government land management agencies are full of the most wonderfully dedicated staff who try their best day in, day out to conserve our environment. Indeed, many are members of FOG. However, decades of budget cuts have hobbled government land management agencies with too few staff and funds to undertake essential management activities.

As examples, during a second wet year, one agency told me in February that they had run out of weed control funding for the financial year to June. Late last year, Vice-President Sarah Sharp and I visited two high conservation value grassland sites outside reserves on public lands with populations of two nationally endangered species to find nearly every weed known in the ACT infesting the land. At another site, I am unfortunately having to negotiate to use government grant monies as matching funds to get core agency funds allocated to building a fence to exclude off-road vehicles: this should be standard government business.

One response from FOG and other community groups is to adopt key areas of habitat and undertake voluntary conservation work. FOG plays leading roles in voluntary work to manage grassy ecosystem habitats like Gurubung Dhauru (Stirling) Park in Yarralumla, Yarramundi Reach in Acton, Hall Cemetery and Budjan Galindji in Franklin. We even lease the Top Hut Travelling Stock Reserve near Aaminaby! But how do we ensure that our volunteer labour is not providing a further excuse for political leaders to cut government conservation funding?



In my view there is a fine line to be trodden by organisations like ours. The interest in sites that we show from the community is often the catalyst needed for governments to step up their management activities. FOG volunteers may have greater expertise than government or contractor staff for conservation and restoration of particular grassland species and habitats, and our labour-intensive, fine-scale and expert interventions may not readily be provided by others. Further, our involvement in a site often generates ownership by local residents who are then the eyes and ears for conservation threats and opportunities that escape notice in the infrequent visits by government staff.

My contention is that FOG should continue to strategically volunteer to manage key grassy ecosystem sites provided that we use our involvement to advocate for political leaders to adequately fund government agencies and adopt meaningful conservation policies.

It is in part for these reasons that FOG has appointed Aaron Midson as our first Project Officer (in collaboration with the Sustineo sustainable development consultancy firm). Aaron will be our first paid advocate for grassy ecosystems. Yet it is essential that FOG retains the active help of our volunteer members. The idea in employing a Project Officer is that, while FOG will continue to react to key development proposals, we can now do more to use our limited resources to proactively argue for systematic conservation programs for grassy ecosystems.

Thank you to the many members who joined me in making an end-of-financial year tax-deductible donation to FOG. Between us, we have raised a welcome \$11,570. This will assist FOG to conserve neglected grassland flora and fauna through projects and support our Project Officer to advance our advocacy agenda for grasslands conservation.

I would welcome your feedback on the issues raised in this article and in the newsletter more broadly by writing to: [newsletter@fog.org.au](mailto:newsletter@fog.org.au). Thank you for your support for grasslands!

*Prof. Jamie Pittock*  
President

# Advocacy Report

*Sarah Sharp*

Aaron Midson has been appointed as FOG's Project Officer, commencing on 26 July. Jamie and Sarah have discussed priorities with Aaron, with an emphasis on achieving pro-active outcomes. Aaron will provide a report to each of the committee meetings on work undertaken. Sarah will work with Aaron on his program and is the main contact for this shared work.

## June 2022

### *Casey Recreational Park Draft Concept Plan*

Our submission to YOURSAY CONVERSATIONS for the Casey concept plan reflected other community concerns about the protection of trees, nature and culture. To summarise: that protecting the existing trees and natural landscape is important to the community for the many benefits these provide including shade, maintenance of existing flora and fauna habitat, and the opportunity to connect with nature; that the community supports the planting of more shade trees as well as indigenous plants; that indigenous culture be incorporated into, and Traditional Owners engaged with, on the design of the park.

We received a response to our submission that summarised these themes (see What We Heard website below). The Casey Community Recreation Park draft design will be released in mid 2022.

### *Draft Urban Forest Bill, 2/6/22*

FOG expressed concern that the draft Bill does not adequately address the long-term protection of remnant trees in the urban environment, either on leased or unleased (public) land, or address the need to protect natural regeneration or plantings of remnant species (including non-Eucalyptus species). While there is significant overlap of issues concerned with the mitigation of the threat of clearance of mature native trees there is inadequate legislation to ensure such trees get adequate protection, as it does not properly recognise that such trees are effectively irreplaceable. There is recognition of the importance of senescent trees in the landscape, but inconsistencies in the treatment of them in the draft Bill.

Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS) has summarised key themes in stakeholder responses to consultation on the Bill in their 'What We Heard' report, available [here](#).

*Planning System Review and Reform Project 15/6/22* FOG supports the review of the planning system, if it provides the opportunity to enhance the protection in perpetuity of conservation areas across all tenures. This support is based on

the principle that conservation of existing biodiversity in the ACT is of critical importance to public health and welfare, resilience to climate change, and protection of our multiplicity of species and habitat interactions and processes; and on the expectation that the aim of biodiversity conservation will be genuinely and consistently incorporated into planning goals. District strategies are to be developed to guide planning - the means by which, FOG believes, such outcomes can be achieved. FOG has indicated that we wish to be involved in further discussions.

## July 2022

No submissions against Government consultations were finalised in July.

The Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC) referral package for Lawson North has been lodged with the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DECCEW). It has not yet been put out for public comment. See <https://epbcpublicportal.awe.gov.au/all-referrals>

## August 2022

*Duplication of William Hovell Drive 01/08/2022*

Construction of a 4.5 km road duplication is expected to start in the first half of 2023. FOG made submissions in July and August 2021 regarding the project's Development Application and Environmental Impact Statement. Now, following release of new reports from the ACT Government, FOG has reiterated the responsibility of government and developers to implement stated good intentions regarding environmental outcomes. Particularly, FOG has pointed out weaknesses in procurement requirements for environmental contractors, and provided options for more ecologically sound species for planting. Release of plans from the ACT Government regarding environmental impacts of construction and offsets are expected in the coming months.

## Pro-active advocacy

*Biodiversity Network*

The draft Biodiversity Network proposal has gone to the Biodiversity Working Group and FOG committee for comment. The concept has been discussed with advisors to the Minister of Environment and in the Biodiversity Conservation Forum held in June. If adopted this proposal will offer an opportunity, within the planning review, for planning legislation to include a conservation category to be applied to land uses other than nature reserves or national parks.

The full text of all submissions appears on FOG's [website](#)

# Tiger Moths, subfamily Arctiinae - brightly coloured for protection

*Michael Bedingfield*

The darkness of the night has a magical quality and its creatures are silent or very quiet most of the time, reflecting the silence which is so soothing to us humans. Moths are mysterious insects and most are active at night. I have photographed over 160 species that have come to my home, the great majority of which came out of the darkness and were attracted to my house lights. Sometimes the night's silence was disturbed by the gentle sound of moth wings beating against my kitchen's windowpane. But there are some moths that are active by day and I mention a few of these in this article. The ones I have chosen for this essay are brightly coloured Tiger Moths from the subfamily Arctiinae. I have photographed them in daylight while exploring Canberra's grassy landscapes.

There are over 20,000 species of moth in Australia, of which only about 11,000 of them have been described and named scientifically. Over 2000 species have been recorded in the A.C.T. and the number is growing constantly as the result of the work of local moth enthusiasts. Canberra Nature Map (CNM) has been of great assistance in documenting this work. My book reference is "Moths in the A.C.T." which is a huge step forward in revealing some of the secrets of moths to the general public. CNM's list of A.C.T.'s Tiger Moths is given in my references.



There are nearly 300 Australian species in the large subfamily Arctiinae of Tiger Moths. The subfamily occurs worldwide, mainly in the tropics, but there are more than a few local species. The subfamily common name comes from the colouring, the more well known of which are quite striking in yellow-orange and black or may include bright red. These colours are meant to warn or repel predators, so they are usually unpalatable or are mimicking such species. Many of these species are able to exude a pungent secretion when disturbed. Some species are black and white and there are others that have plainer colours that camouflage them in their preferred environment.

Donovan's Tiger Moth *Aloa marginata* comes to light at night and can be flushed out during daytime walks. I found a female in the delicate occupation of egg laying on a plant stem. The wings are mostly white with streaks and dots of black and red, orange or yellow. The abdomen has the same colouring. The larvae are dark brown with cream spots and very hairy, and feed on a variety of low growing herbs. Speaking generally, adult moths don't need much food, but have a liquid diet and feed using a long proboscis. They feed mostly on flower nectar and are important pollinators. But they also feed on fruits, and more rarely on the honeydew of scale insects and other nutritious liquids they may find.

Handmaiden Moth is the name that covers the genus *Amata*. They have wings that are black with orange or yellow spots and abdomens that are striped in those colours. They are day flying and are attracted to light too. The adults feed actively on flowers, particularly Blackthorn *Bursaria spinosa* when it is available. Many species have similar wing patterns and the patterns are variable within species, so it is usually impossible to identify species from photographs. They are quite common and their spectacular colouring makes them easy to see.

The Heliotrope Moth *Utetheisa pulchelloides* is white with lots of red and white dots. It is a common sight in daytime rambles in the warmer months, perching on low vegetation or fluttering away to a safe distance when disturbed. The larvae feed on plants of the Borage or Forget-me-not family. There are a number of other similar looking *Utetheisa* species but most occur more to the north of Australia.

The wings of Shepherd's Footman *Termessa shepherdii* are coloured in bars of black and yellow. The feather-like antennae of the specimen in my photograph indicate that it is a male. There are numerous *Termessa* species that have similar colouring so care is required to identify to species. Some of the larvae of these species have been found to feed on lichen. There are a lot of moth species for which the larvae are not known so researchers will sometimes take unrecognisable caterpillars into "protective custody" and raise them to adults to find out what species they belong to.

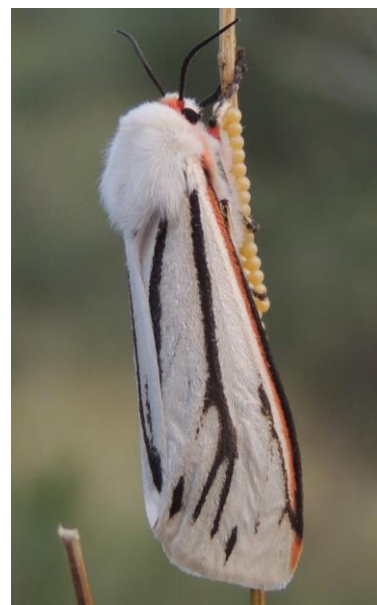
What I have provided here is a glimpse into only one subfamily of moths, a tiny window into the variety of moths that one might find at home or in your favourite patch of nature. You can find out about National Moth Week and how to become a "mother" at the address given in the references.

References:

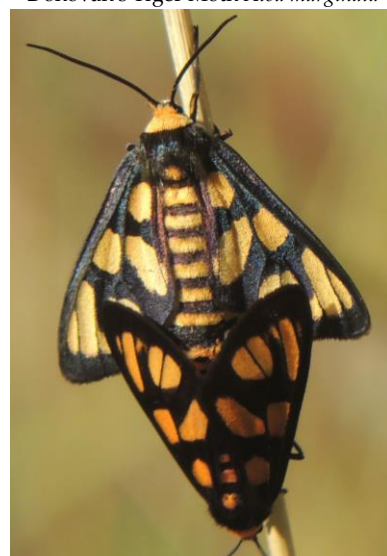
"Moths in the A.C.T." Glenn Cocking, Suzi Bond and Ted Edwards, published by Glenn Cocking.

<https://canberra.naturemapr.org/categories/guide/319>

<https://nationalmothweek.org/>



Donovan's Tiger Moth *Aloa marginata*



Handmaiden Moth



Shepherd's Footman  
*Termessa shepherdii*



Heliotrope Moth *Utetheisa pulchelloides*

# Close Up - More thriving species

John Fitz Gerald

This time I'll continue to look closely at seeds of some species which I've seen doing very well in the current good growing seasons and releasing plenty of seed in many local grassy places.

I'll begin with *Centaureum* sp. Plantnet tells me there are 2 Centaury species in NSW and ACT and it is an exotic annual, possibly biannual, genus. I have seen microforests of these plants in too many areas, and too many individuals even in areas of high quality grassland. I picked a few plants in July and was startled to find its shrivelled flowers still held abundant tiny seeds. By the time I collected material, it was far too dried to detect basal rosettes, so I'm missing the main characteristic for a species ID. My seed image has 2 parts - tiny seeds, about 0.2 mm in size with reticulate wrinkles, are shown in the main part to the left. At the top right, I have inset an image of a shrivelled flower still carrying its corolla tube, about 8 mm long, and its calyx; the seed capsule lies inside them. Based on the calyx being just a little over half the corolla length, I suspect this plant was *C. erythraea*, Common Centaury.



*Centaureum* sp

Next I'll pick two from the huge Daisy tribe. As a nod to the theme of transport from last issue, these daisy seeds readily blow about in wind, even in a gentle breeze. Firstly, I'll show another annual exotic, the invasive Flax-leaved Fleabane, *Erigeron bonariensis*. Landcarers spend a lot of time mopping up this and sister species. It is somewhat contestable whether or not these hours are spent well since the weed is often given low environmental priority being one that waxes mostly during good seasons, then wanes for years. Its seed is also said to have short lifetime at the soil surface. Grain farmers do not tolerate it due to reductions in crop yield, but a consequence is that populations have been confirmed by Australian state agriculture departments as glyphosate resistant. Anyway, I'm sure you've all seen and/or worked on the metre-high stems carrying large numbers of fluffy heads that popped up across our grasslands last summer. I simply grabbed some flower stems and imaged some seeds. The seeds are plump, around 1 mm long, each still attached to a bristly pappus structure. You can feel excused if you know this plant in the genus *Conyza* - Plantnet still does too!



*Erigeron bonariensis*

Lastly, I'll pick a perennial native daisy, the woody shrub *Cassinia quinquefaria*. While this shrub appears to prefer a partly shaded site where it can grow in dense stands, it also strays into open grasslands but mostly at their edges near grassy woodlands. My image again shows plump seeds around 1 mm long, and pappi. Seed and pappus separate more readily for this daisy - see the individual parts near the bottom of my image.



*Cassinia quinquefaria*

The scale bars near the base of my images represent 0.2 mm for the *Centaureum*, and 1 mm for both daisies. Micrographs were taken at the National Seed Bank of the Australian National Botanic Gardens. They can be reproduced freely if attributed and linked to the Creative Commons licence CC BY.

Finally, I need to correct an error that I missed (curse that autocorrect!) in the close-up from the Jul-Aug issue: the first seed mentioned was a *Bidens* species and should have been *B. subalternans*.

Plantnet - <https://plantnet.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/cgi-bin/NSWfl.pl?page=nswfl&lvl=gn&name=Centaureum>



# Fowles Street Park project

*Alice Hathorn*

In 2019 an environmental restoration project began to protect mature and hollow bearing trees which are keystone species in the Yellow Box - Blakely's Red Gum Woodlands (Box Gum Grassy Woodland) that once covered the fertile valleys where many of Canberra's suburbs have been built.

The project was a response to research showing hollow bearing trees may be entirely lost from Canberra's urban greenspace within 115 years.

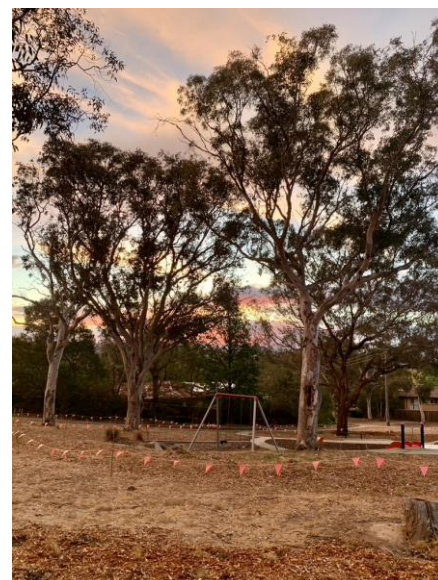
A pilot was developed using low-cost methods to protect mature and hollow bearing trees in an urban park in Weston by reuniting them with the critically endangered Box Gum Grassy Woodland plant community.

This project proceeded under the assumption the park was heavily modified and sought to arrest its decline by improving ecological function using the local Box Gum Grassy Woodland as the reference ecosystem.

As improvement in the ecological function of the park is also dependent on what people plant in their gardens the project shares information about the importance of planting local plant species in suburban gardens with the community. Research has shown the health of parks is dependent on the network of greenspaces in the landscape around them.

A strategic approach to weed removal was designed beginning with African Love Grass (ALG) and Chilean Needle Grass (CNG). Both species have a large and persistent seedbank. Manipulating soil conditions including factors like nitrogen levels and microbial activity proved useful with both species now appearing only rarely in restored areas.

Constant disruption like mowing damages habitat and therefore the health of the park creating a permanently young and simplified landscape. This results in conditions which favour invasive weeds like ALG and CNG so reducing mowing frequency and the size of the area mowed is an important part of the weed strategy.



The use of native tussocks as pedestrian barriers allow for the retention of fallen timber under the canopy of hollow bearing trees and provide a clear mowing guide for ease of maintenance.

Plant species recognised as functionally important to the Box Gum Grassy Woodland beginning with early colonising species, are returned and any natural regeneration encouraged to provide habitat for insect life including those species connected to the bird food web.

Equally important is the ongoing engagement with the community who are eagerly welcoming Box Gum Grassy Woodland plant species into their own gardens and sharing a new appreciation for the unmistakable beauty of our native grasses and woodland flowers and the insect and bird life they evolved to support.



Making room for local plant species, planting in ways that facilitate wildlife movement and leaving some wild places in the garden becomes part of an active and meaningful connection with and caring for country.

The community was delighted last Spring when the park produced a wonderful living example of a recovering Box Gum Grassy Woodland with a biodiverse show of woodland flowers and the return of 11 species of native butterfly, 10 % of the native butterfly species in the region. Moth species and native bees are also returning to the excitement of the local community.



Over 40 species of native bird have been documented residing in or visiting the park including the southern boobook, tawny frogmouth, Gang-gangs, satin bower birds and small bird species like the white browed scrub wren, blue wren, eastern spinebill and brown thornbill to name a few. Over 100 of the original native plant species are now in the park and contributing to the return of the native seedbank.

Damaging myths about our beautiful eucalypts and native grasses which lead to the removal of our local trees and loss of local

biodiversity are giving way to respect for their unique adaptations and ability to withstand climate change.

The assumptions we hold shape what we see and experience. Sharing knowledge about the Box Gum Grassy Woodland through an ecological restoration has proven a wonderful lens through which to see nature and appreciate the essential ecological services local plant communities have evolved to provide. Following the evidence to protect and restore them is the road to ecosystem resilience in the face of climate change.

## Our native grasslands and the people who care for them (part 3)

*This is another extract from Jenny Horsfield's book in progress, "Our native grasslands and the people who care for them".*

CEW Bean, journalist with the Sydney Morning Herald and soon to become official war correspondent for the 1st AIF, travelled through the Murray Darling country in 1913 and wrote a book about what he saw. Bean wanted to inform the Australian people about life 'on the back stations' and about the challenges for the men and women who lived there and managed the huge outback runs. They were the people who ran the sheep industry that fed and clothed the nation. *On the Wool Track* was a book of its time, celebrating the 'white man' who had come to this harsh country and 'transformed it' - made it at least partly 'habitable' - by providing the living conditions for sheep: tanks, wells, dams, as well as fences to mark their runs and to safeguard the flocks against dingoes. Bean wrote with admiration about these early squatters, whose courage, stamina and commonsense he deeply respected. From our contemporary perspective we would judge him to have been quite blind to the impact of their dealings, both known and covert, on the indigenous people they were displacing.

He was not blind, however, to the impact sheep were having on the land, because he talked to men who saw what was happening. One man who took up the first homestead lease in the Central West, recalled:

'When first I rode my horse on this red country, it was all beautifully grassed open land away to the hills. And the soil was so loose that my horse sank up to his fetlocks at every step and the sheep drove their feet deep into it as they walked ... but in a year or two the sheep had trodden in the whole face of it. No sooner was the ground solid than up came this pine-scrub thick all over the surface'.

Bean's own observations included noting that in places the sheep '(with the rabbits to help them) have eaten out the roots of the grass and saltbush, and so trampled and trodden and powdered the face of the country that it has blown clean away and piled itself up behind tree clumps and over fences and old stockyards...'



Still, the book after all is a celebration of what at the time was a great rural industry and the people who sustained it; it comes out of a world very different to the one we inhabit. It was a world still optimistic about the continuing progress which the new century had brought. Bean's coming years on Gallipoli and the Western Front were to darken his outlook, though they did not dim his admiration for the countrymen who, he believed, formed the distinctive character of the AIF.

## Scottsdale - a study in grassland restoration (part 2)

*Geoff Robertson, Kath McGuirk, Linda Spinaze & Margaret Ning*

*In part 1 we told how on FOG's recent visit to Scottsdale we were treated to an overview from Phil on arrival, visited the nursery and the seed production area with Kim, then moved to Tein's patch and next, several Button Wrinklewort patches including the cross-breeding program paddock. Our next stop was the shed where Phil explained his tools of trade - the harvester and plant guards - before we visited the Redleg grass paddock and its deer and kangaroo-proof fence, and then an area regenerating after fire. Now for part 2.*

We next drove towards the first Scottsdale scrape-and-sow site and on the way Phil showed us adjacent areas, one treated with flupropanate to remove African Love Grass, and the other not. The first was devoid of ALG while in the second ALG thrived - the spray line (between the sprayed and unsprayed areas) was very obvious. The untreated area had not been sprayed as it was considered too close to the scrape-and-sow. The treated area had been boom-sprayed by aircraft using extremely low amounts of flupropanate. Scottsdale pioneered this approach many years ago - it successfully removes ALG without having an impact on other plants.

Then we visited one of the highly successful scrape-and-sow areas. While not obvious from the photo, the site was thick with a diversity of local native grasses especially Kangaroo grass, and wildflowers. It is relatively weed free although at the border of the scrape weeds threaten. The scrape-and-sow method was developed by Paul Gibson Roy, and has been extensively used by Greening Australia. It involves removing ten centimetres of top soil to remove nutrients and weed seed, and then seeding with a variety of grassland grasses and wildflowers. This Bush Heritage Area site was developed by Nicki Taws who continues to monitor it.

We then drove into the Scottsdale hills along a challenging four-wheel-drive track. We stopped at a population of *Eucalyptus pulverulenta* (Silver Leaf Mountain Gum, a vulnerable species under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act). This was an area burnt in the 2020 bushfire. The trees were re-sprouting from their base and heathy grasses and wildflowers were plentiful. According to Phil the understorey looked somewhat sparse during the drought but had recovered well with the rains.

Our next stop was a view looking south-east from the track - it was magnificent. Turning to ground level, Phil said that before the rain this had been dominated by tall speargrass. It also contains a variety of forbs, but with the rains ALG has become highly invasive - a challenge ahead.

We then moved to the northern end of the ridge overlooking the Murrumbidgee River, after a delightful, if a little challenging, drive through a wonderful woodland. At this stop we could observe the numerous skeletons of Black



*Scrape-and-sow*



*View from south-east end of the ridge*



cypress prominent across the hills. Phil discussed many topics, including the river, fish, dingoes, deer, birds, koalas, etc. Then we drove back to base through the long valley of Scottsdale.

The Scottsdale team manage a range of activities, many more than were demonstrated on that day. Phil and Kim said that it had been very fulfilling for the team to see the changes that they are making over time. As our party observed, the initial vision of Scottsdale has been exceeded many times over - the valley floor and lower hills of the property, which used to be an ALG and serrated tussock grassland, is now on its way to becoming a high-quality natural temperate grassland, Box Gum grassy woodland and magnificent fauna habitat.



*Driving the ridge*



*Overlooking the Murrumbidgee River, north end of ridge*

Thanks to Phil and Kim for hosting the trip and to Margaret for organising it.

## Grasslands Interest Group

### *Bellarine Landcare*

The Grasslands Interest Group (GIG) was created by Bellarine Landcare Group in 2020 at the start of the COVID pandemic. It fosters an appreciation of the various grassy ecosystems that are, or used to be, found on the Bellarine Peninsula, by organising learning sessions (mostly online) and site visits, and by connecting people.

After raising interest through initial introductions to experts in grasslands we soon worked out that it would be useful, if not essential, to be able to identify the difference between native grass species and weed (not wanted) species in situ. Consequently, we organised various online presentations on grass ID, weed management, soil health, and related topics such as ecological burning, restoration and propagation.

GIG is now attempting to cycle through a seasonal agenda that includes learning about something, seeing it in nature and then attempting to apply the concepts to ones own property or interest. As an example, we have learnt how to identify some of the main native grasses, gone exploring in the local areas, then attempted to collect seed and/or get a patch established on our own bits of dirt. As we learn more, we appreciate our local parks and natural spaces more and more.



While we are a relatively small group on the Bellarine, we have connected with other groups interested in grassland ecosystems in south eastern Australia. We interact with the local Catchment Management Authority, the Bellarine Catchment Network, and with the four adjacent Landcare networks: Friends of Grasslands (FoG) based in the ACT, City of Greater Geelong (CoGG) environmental department, Connecting Country (based around Castlemaine), Wimmera Landcare Group, and others.

In the past 18 months we've had online presentations on grass and weed ID, land management practices (including ecological burning), and exemplars of people and groups that have restored or revegetated their patches of native grassland. While COVID

disrupted many of our planned visits, we still managed a few outings to local areas of interest. These are, in any case, more interesting in spring and early summer, which is when we have managed to get out into the field.

At the start, most of us thought we were 'interested in native grasses'. Over time, we have understood that it is a more complex matter ... native grass species form only 10-20% of the species that were present in healthy, diverse grassland ecosystems .... and grasses are the resilient species. What we missed (or maybe what have been substantially lost in Victoria) are the orchids, herbs and forbs that make up the 80 to 90% of species in a grassland.

One of the more challenging topics has been the impact of soils on the biological health of ecosystems. This has had us questioning the so-called gold standards of grassland restoration, such as scalping and broadacre spraying. Understanding the complex interactions between the soil microbiology and plant species has raised interesting and as yet unresolved conflicts in the way we approach native grassland restoration, revegetation and the protection of remnant patches.

For new members or people starting on their grassland journey, GIG can offer some useful online introductions to grass and weed ID. In addition, there are a number of online practical 'how to' sessions on soil health, restoring native grasslands and activating soil health for grassland ecosystems.

In planning for future events, we hope to broaden our thinking on grassland ecosystems, so we will be looking at other plant species found in grasslands, such as orchids and herbs. Plus, we are looking to understand the different functions and aspects of different grassland species.



## Native Terrestrial Orchids

*Michael Robinson - Grasslands Interest Group*

*On Wed 27 July 2022, Geoff Robertson gave a webinar presentation to Friends of Grasslands and the Grassland Interest Group, on native terrestrial orchids.*

Orchidaceae, commonly called the orchid family, is a diverse and widespread family of flowering plants, with blooms that are often colourful and fragrant. It is the second largest family of plants, smaller than the Asteraceae family (daisies, sunflowers and asters), and larger than the Poaceae or Gramineae family (grasses and cereals). Orchids are monocots and most closely related to lilies.

To introduce terrestrial orchids, Geoff used photographs to dissect their structure, illustrating how they have both male parts (stamens) and female parts (ovaries) fused in the column (which is one of their differences from other plants), a lateral and two dorsal petals, and a labellum and two sepals.

Geoff then highlighted the orchids commonly found in grasslands, emphasising those from the Victorian Grasslands Survey using both his own and borrowed photos. He also showed some of the orchids found in woodlands. Although the group names don't exactly roll off the tongue, we looked at examples of:

Diuris - Moth, Cowslip, Leopard or Donkey orchids

Prasophyllum - Leek orchids

Microtia - Onion orchid

Thelymitra - Sun orchids

Pterostylis - Greenhood orchids

Eriochilus - Parson bands or Bunny orchids

Hopefully this brief introduction whets the appetite for more. Geoff suggests that as there is a lot written about orchids a wide variety of information is readily available. In the field he recommends carrying a hand lens to enhance the identification and viewing experience. His only plea is not to forget the other plant families as orchids can be seductive.

Geoff manages to make these webinars highly engaging by using a wide selection of photographs to present technicalities. We might not remember every detail, but we do learn something each time and hopefully get inspiration for more. Thanks Geoff once again.



# Vale Don Wood

Geoff Robertson

Many members who have been interested in Canberra and south-east NSW native plants will be familiar with the inseparable duo of Don and Betty Wood. Don died on 15 July just short of his 93rd birthday and his funeral was held in Canberra on 20 July. Don was born in England and migrated to New Zealand and then to Australia, where he worked for CSIRO mainly on the management of rabbits.

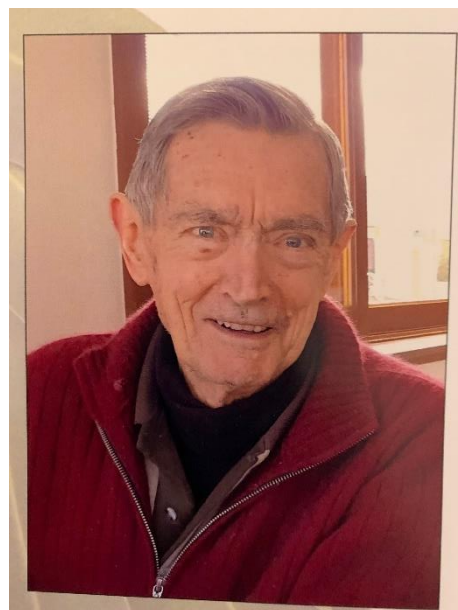
Many people will be familiar with Don dressed in his favourite uniform - a shirt, shorts and thongs. He and Betty were members for many years of the Australian Native Plant Society Canberra, and of Friends of Grasslands. They joined us on many of our trips, with Betty botanising and sharing her immense knowledge, while Don took amazing photos.

Their research and photographs resulted in the publication of their delightful *Flowers of the ACT and Region* and three volumes of *Flowers of the South Coast and Ranges of New South Wales*. They gave many talks, led field trips, and for decades operated their ANPS Weetangera shade-house. Between them they made a major contribution to Canberra Nature Map.

There is probably not an area in south-east NSW, Canberra and many other places that they have not walked, and in some cases climbed over, to familiarise themselves with our native flora. This was the basis of their astonishing knowledge and photographs of plants. They shared their wealth of knowledge with scientists and non-scientists, especially through their common sense easy-to-follow descriptions of plants, which focussed on how to identify different species in the field, and excellent photos. In sharing their knowledge and passion with others they showed great patience and were never known to turn down any request for assistance.

We circulated a notice of Don's funeral in *Events and Notices*, and many members expressed sadness and an appreciation for his contribution.

Betty, our special condolences to you and your family. We in FOG are very grateful to have shared our good times together, and we celebrate Don's and your many accomplishments.



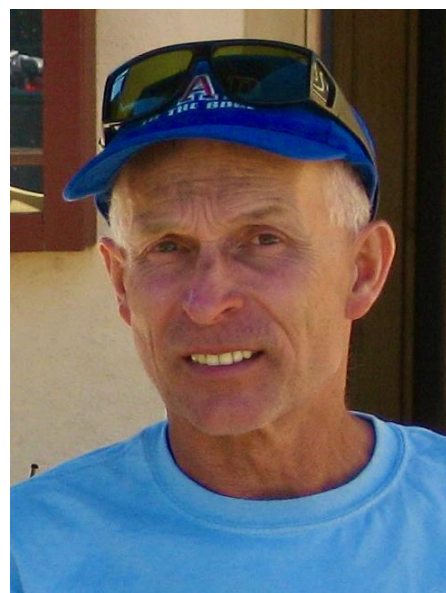
# Vale Dave Mallinson

Geoff Robertson

I had the great but sad privilege of delivering one of the eulogies at Dave's funeral held at one of his very favourite places, Gundaroo Cemetery, one of the Canberra region's spectacular grasslands.

Many members of FOG will have known Dave and have their own special memories of him. I first met Dave in August 1996 on returning to Oz after living in Moscow and Washington DC. My mother-in-law, Audrey Jones, registered me for a FOG work party at St Mark's grassland in Barton and spoke very highly of Dave. I turned up with rake in hand, and there was Dave with one other person, raking the mown long grass to prevent it from smothering new grasses and wildflowers that were emerging. It was not long before I enthusiastically commenced raking and carrying grass, as I fell into a conversation with Dave. This was my first encounter in getting to know about grasslands, their diversity and management. Audrey was right about Dave, and about encouraging us to join FOG, especially as we needed to learn about our then newly acquired property of Garuwanga.

Dave was a key founding member of FOG. He told me of early committee meetings at Edwina Barton's home where the foundations of FOG were laid and the framework of future activity established. To me, it has always been amazing that the key elements of FOG were all there from the beginning: field trips to observe and learn about the plants; on-ground work to get one's hands dirty and to learn; advocacy based on good science, well considered argument and a respect



for others; research to deepen all our work and understanding; newsletter and community engagement of a very high standard to spread that understanding; and sound governance. While many people contributed to FOG's establishment, Dave was in the mix and his contribution is very discernible. Anyone who knew Dave knows he only went to committee meetings if he considered it absolutely essential. We are grateful that he persevered with FOG.

Margaret and I met him at many activities. Margaret soon began to organise FOG field trips and he was a key preferred expert on these trips. As everyone knows, his knowledge of plants was phenomenal, the result of his personal reading and research, numerous field trips collecting for his work, and his tremendous curiosity. He also had a gift for explaining his knowledge. If a group was looking at a plant, and its flower in particular, he would casually describe its physical characteristics (morphology), compare and contrast it with its cousins, describe its preferred habitat and growth characteristics. He was also an excellent grower of plants. His knowledge extended to any natural phenomenon and beyond, to many scientific and other issues.

He combined all this with a wicked sense of humour, his puns were so so, and he was a great mimic of peoples' voices and foibles. I learnt at his funeral that he loved Johnny Cash and would make great impersonations of him - I feel sad I never knew this as JC is also one of my favourites. Dave was somewhat quirky. His being a vegetarian wasn't for ideological reasons - he simply didn't like meat. Many familiar with his boyhood refer to his love of nature, egg collecting and getting up to what may be described as general mischief.

Dave was one of the four authors of *Grassland* (and later *Woodland*) *Flora*. These are amazing books and when *Grassland Flora* was first published it became an indispensable encyclopaedia of local grassland plants and much more. Both books continue to have a remarkable impact. He put a long and great effort into making this project a success - another example of Dave's endurance on behalf of a good cause.

We publicised his death in FOG's *Events and Notices* and received many wonderful comments. Dave was highly regarded by numerous people. In fact, I cannot recall anyone having a bad word to say about him. He always kept his cool and would calmly put his arguments and never bully those with whom he might not agree. Nevertheless, he was honest with people and let them know what he thought.

The many comments about Dave included a reminder of his discovery of, and work towards the recovery of, *Muehlenbeckia tuggerangong*. On one occasion he led a FOG trip to visit the small wild population. It was great that Bob Makinson came to Dave's funeral, as he and Dave co-authored the paper '*Muehlenbeckia tuggerangong*'.

This quote is from Andrew Zelnik: 'From the relatively few occasions I met Dave I remember his modesty, friendliness, cheeky sense of humour, readiness to share his knowledge, keen interest in and love of nature, and of course his trademark baseball cap and sunnies.'

Through Dave we met and became great friends with the delightful and caring Eleanor who has been an immensely important person in Dave's life, caring for him in his final years when dementia struck. She informed me that Gundaroo Cemetery was a favourite place for Dave, and in their early years he delighted in taking her there to be amongst the amazing grassland flora. She, like so many of us, was delighted by his passion for these wonderful, small and subtle grassland flowers.

Our thoughts and best wishes go to Eleanor, her family and Dave's family. He will be remembered.

## Blue Gum Point woodland restoration, Yarralumla (year 2)

*The following extract is from FOG's 'ACT Environment and Nature in the City Grants 2021-2022' application, prepared by Jamie Pittock and submitted on 31 July 2022. Ed.*

Project

Summary

In the Financial Year 2022, FOG undertook a second year of work to restore about eight hectares of ACT Urban Parks land with significant Box-Gum grassy woodland at Blue Gum Point east. This ecological community is listed as nationally endangered at the ACT and federal levels and the site contains populations of the nationally endangered Button Wrinklewort (*Rutidosis leptorhynchoides*) and Golden Sun Moth (*Synemon plana*).

A rare population of Buloke (*Allocasuarina luehmannii*) is being conserved through weed removal and supplementary planting. The project contributes to implementation of the ACT Native Woodland Conservation Strategy 2019. Removal of the dense woody weeds along the lake shore aids access for control of Alligator Weed (*Alternanthera philoxeroides*),



further contributing to the ACT management plan. Volunteer work led by Con Boekel has resulted in 242 species of plants and animals being recorded to Canberra Nature Map from the site.

Considerable progress has been made in FY22 to restore the eastern end of the site. A lot of rubbish has been removed. Wet conditions have meant that work has been focused on spraying weeds (grasses, St John's Wort, blackberry), on felling and chipping woody weeds, and on hand removal of ivy and Japanese honeysuckle. Wet ground prevented the contractor's access to the lake edge, delaying site clearance until late in FY22. Revegetation of the disturbed lake shore with indigenous species has been postponed to FY23. The final portion of woody weeds should also be treated in FY23. We aim to restore the area to a condition from FY23 that will require a much lower investment in management.

## Budjan Galindji Update

Margaret Ning

It's official; we have one million Blue Devils emerging at Budjan Galindji since the ecological burn on 21 March!! Perhaps I exaggerate, but it sure looks like that sometimes. Meanwhile, *Chrysocephalum apiculatum*, *Calocephalus citreous*, *Goodenia pinnatifida*, *Convolvulus erubescens*, and *Themeda triandra* are the other most abundant of the native species coming back on the site. We are sighting one new native species each month, which is also quite exciting. *Drosera* sp., *Leptorhynchus squamatus* and *Cheilanthes* sp. are the most recent additions. We are also sighting a couple of pea species which is even better as they are very thin on the ground these days.

Our association with the offsets unit continues. We are in great hands with Rangers Maree and Stephen and weeds guy Antony. Whether it is general ecological advice or spray queries, they are wonderfully responsive. And then there are our volunteers who turn up month in, month out, winter and summer, always keen to try new strategies. Everyone's identification skills are developing nicely too.

Since the burn, our working bee tasks have been varied, and have included:

- spraying exotic grasses (before they regrow too much)
- cutting and daubing blackberry
- pulling St Johns Wort stalks
- compiling a species list of plants that emerged post fire (including abundance scores)
- raking slash and dragging a tarp of it away
- 'micro' weeding within a patch of natives
- mapping completed actions or plant sightings
- daubing rosettes with a 'dauber doover' or weeding wand

Sometimes it is challenging to choose the appropriate tasks for the next working bee. It could depend on who will be attending, or whether it has rained. If it has rained the Fiskars extractor tool comes into its own for flat weed, and hand-pulling of St Johns Wort can proceed. Hand-pulling slows down the plant's development until someone can have a go at it with some Starane, and of course it will then be a smaller target and lead to minimal collateral damage.

I would like to think that there is no time like the present for tackling the exotic grasses (eg Phalaris, Cocksfoot, Fog Grass and Paspalum), as they have re-emerged quickly since the burn. I also allow myself gratuitous squirts at emerging Flat Weed, exotic Plantain, Wild Sage, and Tragopogon, especially when they are outliers in a patch of natives. Our little SE corner is only a small part of the whole Franklin site, but it is our mini-experiment in regeneration to see the different battles we have to fight, post fire, to liberate the natives from the invasive exotics.

And the other day, I was on my umpteenth tank of glyphosate and heading for yet another patch of Phalaris, when I had a sudden thought, 'will the threatened Striped Legless Lizards have enough habitat in spring?' Fortunately when Ranger Stephen visited us at our last working bee he reassured me that the lizards would still be fine as they were probably not active yet, and the *Themeda* would start growing again soon. He also brought us some marker flags which we use to mark a quality spot of re-emerging vegetation, or even individual plants of pea species.

Looking down the track to spring and summer, I can see a time when all we can do to fight the exotic Plantain and Wild Oats will be to whippersnip their seed heads off. That moment is still some time off, but the Budjan Galindji volunteers will be ready for it.

# FOG Project Officer

Aaron Midson

Hello fellow FOGs! As I start work as Project Officer, I thought that I'd take the opportunity to introduce myself. I am an ANU graduate, keen cyclist, and ecology enthusiast.

Studying environment and sustainability at the ANU I conducted research during my Honours year, testing and evaluating a method which measures drought-stress in plants. At ANU I also worked on projects tackling challenges of renewable energy policy. My interest now is in how science and policy meld together. Working at Greening Australia I got a taste for the impact that local conservation and regeneration initiatives can make in the ACT.

I have begun work within the FOG advocacy group, supervised by Sarah Sharp. Moving forwards, I will be involved in both responsive and pro-active advocacy for the important grassy ecosystems which Canberra is so lucky to have. It is good timing to start in this role, as the ACT Government have affirmed their priority to protect and conserve our threatened ecological communities in the 2022-23 budget. Now it's time to help our policymakers implement these good intentions!

I hope to meet you at a grassland soon.

## Gininderry Conservation Corridor tour, Fri 9 Sept

Margaret Ning

Join the Ginninderry Conservation Trust for a tour of their Conservation Corridor. Their Rangers will provide an overview of the area and you will hear from Riverview Developments Sustainability Manager, Jess Stewart, about the amazing sustainability initiatives happening in Ginninderry. This unique area is home to beautiful Box-gum woodlands, natural temperate grasslands and elusive Pink-tailed Worm-lizards. The tour will take us for a drive through the rolling 240ha which is currently under Trust management. We will stop to check out some beautiful sites and talk about the cultural significance of the area. If you are looking for a lunch option on return to The Link, look no further than Café Stepping Stone which is a social enterprise business at the Strathnairn Arts Centre.

We shall minimise our footprint and have a maximum of ten people on this activity. An extra couple of 4WDs would be welcome, so please let me know if you can bring one.



## Donations



FOG uses donations to fund various projects such as the Grassy Ecosystem Grants, and on-ground projects such as the Top Hut TSR Project. You can make a tax-deductible donation to the FOG Public Fund:

*Direct debit: BSB 633 000, A/c 15343960 (Bendigo Bank).*

*Please include your name and notify our Treasurer([treasurer@fog.org.au](mailto:treasurer@fog.org.au)) to receive your tax-deductable receipt*

*Or Cheque: payable to 'Friends of Grasslands Public Fund', mailed to Treasurer, Friends of Grasslands Inc., PO Box 440, Jamison Centre, ACT 2614. Include your name and postal address to receive your tax-deductable receipt*

You can include your preference for use, if any, when you make your donation. By law the final decision on the use of tax-deductible donations to the FOG Public Fund rests with the FOG Public Fund Management Committee. Donations to the Public Fund of \$2.00 or more are tax-deductible".



# Recent FoG Events

## O'Malley Amble

Margaret Ning

On Saturday 16 July a dozen FOG members gathered on Dunoon St, O'Malley, in preparation for a light amble over an interesting little pocket of suburbia that is part of the National Capital Authority 'conservation area estate'.



Led by Peter Beutel, soon to be retired from the NCA, we were told that the three urban blocks we wandered over are actually serviced with electricity but essentially no embassy wants them, so they were part of NCA lands Peter was charged with managing. Over the years Peter utilised various volunteer groups to undertake weed management. The RFS undertook training exercises to cut down the pine trees that had grown over the years, and the Conservation Volunteers of Australia were used to cut and remove woody weeds. Due to very limited funding for what was needed to be done the area has slipped into a poorer state. The area is on the lower north-western facing slopes of Mt Mugga Mugga but is a little noisy, a little too slopey, and too challenging from a security perspective for any interest to be shown by embassies.

Areas of conservation value on the site include a small isolated patch of Yellow Box-Blakely's Red Gum grassy woodland with Broad-leaved Peppermint grassy woodland on the steeper rockier slopes. Areas of the site also contain rocky habitat that supports native fauna, and potentially a population of Pink-tailed Worm-lizard, although no animals have been found during previous surveys. There is a high structural diversity consisting of varied strata of vegetation, fallen timber, and tree-hollows which are likely to support native birds, macrofauna and invertebrates.



Vegetation includes around 50 native plant species (eight grass species, nine shrubs, five trees, and 29 forbs were observed on this visit) which is a healthy list for a small pocket. Three species not seen commonly on local FOG wanders include Barbed Wire Grass, *Clematis leptophylla* and *Indigofera adesmiifolia*. Sadly the site is deteriorating with each passing year, as St John's Wort, serrated tussock, saffron thistle, Cootamundra wattle and garden escapee Grevilleas take hold there.

Prime real estate, which is enjoyed by a homeless person for the time being!

## Stirling Park (Gurubung Dhaura) Work Party, 17 July 2022

Paul Archer

Nine volunteers convened on a cold and blustery day at the 2ha former pine plantation site near the corner of Hopetoun Circuit and Fitzgerald Street in Yarralumla. Objectives were to renew the mulch around last year's plantings, to repair plant guards and to collect rubbish from near and far.

The plants are sure to thank us when we return in spring.

Strength was revived with a delicious morning tea provided by Alan, Pam and Jamie.



'At the start line'



## Stirling Park (Gurubung Dhaura) Work Party, 28 August 2022

Friends of Grasslands is getting in early with spring planting at Gurubung Dhaura (Stirling) Park. On 28th August, 19 wonderful volunteers managed to plant 240 ground covers to re-vegetate bare areas where a pine plantation was felled two years ago. The area planted was compacted by use as the operations site of the



felling and chipping operation.

Our planting of kangaroo grass and forbs supplements was undertaken earlier this year with the National Capital Authority and Greening Australia. We are extending grassy box-gum woodland habitat for the endangered Button Wrinklewort. This is the 14th year of FOG's partnership with the National Capital Authority to conserve grassy ecosystems on national lands.



## News Roundup

### Special issues of Ecological Management & Restoration

Andrew Zelnik

Volume 19, Issue S1 'Restore, Regenerate, Revegetate'

This special issue contains nine papers based on invited presentations at *Restore, Regenerate, Revegetate: A Conference on Restoring Ecological Processes, Ecosystems and Landscapes in a Changing World*, at the University of New England from 5–9 February 2017. Conference proceedings including audio recordings and a further 44 refereed papers can be found at <http://www.une.edu.au/about-une/academic-schools/school-of-environmental-and-rural-science/ers-news-and-events/restore-regenerate-revegetate-conference-2017>. See also the write up in Mar-Apr 2017 Newsletter at [https://www.fog.org.au/Newsletters/2017-03newsletter.htm#Restore,\\_Regenerate,\\_Revegetate\\_conference](https://www.fog.org.au/Newsletters/2017-03newsletter.htm#Restore,_Regenerate,_Revegetate_conference)

Volume 22, Issue S1 'Optimum management of overabundant macropods'

This review publishes several of the key studies presented at two 2019 symposia along with invited papers, opinions and letters from key stakeholders. The final synthesis article in this special issue contains a joint

national statement on improving kangaroo management which FOG has endorsed.

Volume 22, Issue S2 'Restoring the Midlands of Tasmania'

This special issue presents a multidisciplinary, multi-institutional, science-based approach to environmental restoration, focused on a single geographic region, the Midlands of Tasmania. It describes how contributions from a wide range of disciplines and stakeholders can be focused to meet the challenges of ecological restoration in highly-altered agricultural landscapes.

Volume 23, Issue S1 'Indigenous and cross-cultural ecology - perspectives from Australia'

This special issue contains contributions from participants in indigenous ecological knowledge symposia held at annual Ecological Society of Australia conferences over a decade to 2020, reflecting increasing cross-cultural and Indigenous-led ecology and management projects across Australia.

### Federal Environment Minister visit to Red Hill Nature Reserve ACT

Andrew Zelnik

Early on a crisp sunny winter morning, Tuesday 2 August, we were treated to a visit by newly installed Federal Environment Minister, Tanya Plibersek. The visit was for

her to find out about Red Hill Nature Reserve's environmental values and management issues, and the work and achievements of the Red Hill Regenerators (RHR) since it was founded in 1989, it being one of the earliest Parkcare groups in the ACT and also amongst the earliest Landcare groups in Australia. I was attending in my capacity as a member of RHR.

The visit was organised by [Landcare ACT](#) whose umbrella covers around 80 organisations comprising Parkcare and Landcare (Aboriginal, rural, urban) groups including FOG and 10 from adjacent areas of NSW. Amongst the Landcare ACT reps were Karissa Preuss (current CEO and former Executive Officer of Ginninderra Catchment Group) and board members Dr Maxine Cooper (current Chair and former ACT Auditor General and ACT Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment) and Kerry Olsson (rural lessee and Deputy Chair of the Southern ACT Catchment Group).

Leading the visit was RHR founder and Conservation Officer (and FOG member), Michael Mulvaney, aided by RHR President, Ross Kingsland. Michael took us to a nice patch of Yellow Box-Blakely's Red Gum Woodland (critically endangered nationally & ACT) that RHR has brought back into high quality condition over the years through regular weed control.

Not long into the visit we were pleasantly surprised by a progressive roll up of local ACT Federal politicians, including newly minted Senator, David Pocock, and recently returned MPs, Alicia Payne and Andrew Leigh, all of whom stayed behind for further discussions.

Minister Plibersek seemed very engaged, and asked well informed questions (as did the other politicians). When she heard about it, she was keen to see a Button Wrinklewort (endangered nationally & ACT) but as Michael explained it would have involved a bit of a hike (and would also be better when it is in flower). Perhaps an excuse for FOG to consider getting her and the others along for a spring/early summer visit at Gurubang Dhaura (Stirling) Park and, for good measure, throw in a visit to Yarramundi Grassland?

Another unexpected VIP in attendance was Bren Burkevics, acting Executive Group Manager Environment, Heritage, Water and acting Conservator of Flora and Fauna, from the ACT Government Environment Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate. After the departure of the politicians and their entourages, there were productive discussions with him about Red Hill NR matters including the proposed Federal Golf Club development and decreases in the ACT Government's weed control budget and activities.

All will have gone away with a better understanding of RHR, and the other groups in Landcare ACT, in terms of

what they do and achieve, and their passion and commitment.



*Left to Right: Karissa Preuss, David Pocock, Alicia Payne, Tanya Plibersek, two RHRG colleagues, Ross Kingsland, Michael Mulvaney*



*Left to Right: David Pocock, Alicia Payne (behind David), Andrew Leigh, Tanya Plibersek, two RHRG colleagues, Ross Kingsland, Michael Mulvaney*

## Flea Bog Flat: Biodiversity Management Plan

*Julia Raine*

This 8.5 hectare bush block is tucked away between South Bruce (Jaeger Cct) and Belconnen Way, but doesn't get much human traffic due to its lack of tracks and often boggy conditions. FOG made its first visit to Flea Bog Flat in autumn 2021, helping to add to the species list, and will return this spring – see below.

Friends of Flea Bog Flat was established in 2019 with more of an historic heritage focus looking into the Old Weetangera Road, a remnant of which runs through the middle of the block. The group however couldn't ignore Flea Bog Flat's natural values and joined the TCCS Urban Parks and Places Volunteer Program in 2020. South Bruce residents have long been aware of the block's



diversity having successfully fended off several attempts at residential development of the site in the 1980s and '90s, armed with a vegetation survey prepared by Dr Masumi Robertson and the late Peter Ormay, finally succeeding (partially) in having it re-zoned as Urban Open Space.

While the Friends started work on the woody weeds, they also received an ACT Environment Grant in 2021 to engage Dr Catherine Ross, from Capital Ecology, to prepare a Biodiversity Management Plan for the block. With help from volunteers including expert helpers Margaret Ning and Dr Masumi Robertson, Dr Ross undertook vegetation and remnant tree surveys, and a spotlighting session which located Krefft's gliders and a ringtail possum.

The Biodiversity Management Plan found that Flea Bog Flat supports:

- 4.5ha of Yellow Box-Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland with an understorey of moderate to high native forb diversity that meets the definition for the EPBC Act 'White Box-Yellow Box-Blakely's Red Gum' Threatened Ecological Community (understorey: 52 native species; 39 native non-grass species; 15 important species);
- 7.8ha of Yellow Box-Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland meeting the Nature Conservation Act definition;
- mature remnant trees including 71 hollow-bearing trees providing habitat for birds and arboreal mammals; and
- habitat for a number of threatened, rare or uncommon species.

The Plan, which will be finalised soon, also provides the Friends with a list of prioritised management actions so they can best work with TCCS to maintain and improve this woodland patch. Please email [fleabogflat@hotmail.com](mailto:fleabogflat@hotmail.com) if you are interested in receiving a copy of the Management Plan. Chris Davey has also been undertaking bird surveys on the block for over 12 months with his findings to be published in Canberra Bird Notes.

The group's broader heritage investigations continue – recent research into the early European land use of the block seems to indicate that the part of the block with higher floristic diversity was brought into the Black Mountain Forest Reserve in the 1930s so has seen less disturbance under rural leaseholds, giving the understorey in that section a few more decades of regeneration than other areas.

FOG will be making a return visit to Flea Bog Flat on Sunday 30 October at 2pm, please see the Events list, RSVP to [fleabogflat@hotmail.com](mailto:fleabogflat@hotmail.com).

## 'Celebrate Threatened Native Grasslands' posters

FOG now has a dozen of the 'Celebrate Threatened Native Grasslands' posters in a 300mm by 600mm size, and on waterproof paper, which is essentially an un-tearable laminated poster.

We are selling them for \$15, so please let me know if you would like one ([margaret.ning@fog.org.au](mailto:margaret.ning@fog.org.au)).



## Parkcare Annual Report

Sue Ross

If you've ever wondered what the ACT Government Parkcare service is, the recently issued ACT Parkcare 2020-21 Annual Report may help. It describes the four streams of activity: Parkcare in Canberra Nature Park and some other specific sites such as offsets, Molonglo etc; Visitor Assist at Tidbinbilla and Namadgi; Ranger Assist to work with PCS Rangers; and Wildlife Assist at Tidbinbilla. It also reports on hours recorded by volunteers and stories of activities from a few of the Parkcare volunteer groups.

[Canberra Nature Park Reserve Management Plan \(act.gov.au\)](https://act.gov.au/canberra-nature-park-reserve-management-plan)

## New newsletter co-ordinator

Geoff Robertson

I am very pleased to announce that Paul Archer has replaced me as FOG's newsletter editor/coordinator. The July-August issue was my last. I would like to express my deepest thanks to Paul. Having worked with him in the past, I am well aware of his many skills and ability to get things done.

I would like to thank everyone, very sincerely, who has been part of our newsletter team, Maree, Libby, Sue and Margaret, and Andrew, and our many many contributors, especially our regular contributors Michael B, John Fitz, Jamie and Sarah (and before her Naarilla) and our many readers. Also thanks to Sarah for the newsletter's collation and to Richard who ensures the newsletter is placed on our website.

The newsletter, like most FOG activities, relies on the contribution of many, many people actively supporting grassy ecosystems. I would like to thank each of you for your skills, patience and tact in handling what is a complex voluntary endeavour.

I have of course offered to assist Paul as he produces his first issue and I am happy to discuss with anyone how he/she might contribute. The newsletter remains an opportunity for each of you to contribute your insights and research and to report on your advocacy and on-ground activities.

## Victoria's brolgas

Geoff Robertson

Brolgas were once common in the grasslands of south east Australia. I was privileged to see two birds with Rainer many years ago near Cootamundra, and I have seen them twice on visits to Victorian grasslands. Sadly, they are almost gone from our south-east grasslands. Ian Penna writes of the plight of one of our most iconic species on page 24-25 of *Parkwatch*, the journal of the *Victorian National Parks Association*. In a thoughtful piece, he raises his concerns about the impact of wind farms (<https://vnpa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/VNPA-Park-Watch-June-2022-289-.pdf>).

## Contact us

General inquiries: [info@fog.org.au](mailto:info@fog.org.au)

Media inquiries: 0407 265 131 (Jamie Pittock)

alt. 0403 221 117 (Geoff Robertson)

Membership to [join or renew](#), [membership@fog.org.au](mailto:membership@fog.org.au)

Events & work parties: [Calendar](#).

Book order forms: [Grassland & Woodland Floras](#).

Small grassy ecosystem grants:

[supportedprojects@fog.org.au](mailto:supportedprojects@fog.org.au)

News of Friends of Grasslands: [Latest & past issues](#). To submit articles & news items [newsletter@fog.org.au](mailto:newsletter@fog.org.au)

Events & notices bulletin: [ebulletin@fog.org.au](mailto:ebulletin@fog.org.au)

Advocacy contact: [advocacy@fog.org.au](mailto:advocacy@fog.org.au)

Website matters: [webmanager@fog.org.au](mailto:webmanager@fog.org.au)

Projects, work parties & contacts:

Hall Cemetery: [john.fitzgerald@fog.org.au](mailto:john.fitzgerald@fog.org.au)

Scrivener's Hut, Gurubang Dhaura (Stirling) Park, Blue Gum Point & Yarramundi Grassland:

[jamie.pittock@fog.org.au](mailto:jamie.pittock@fog.org.au).

Franklin Grasslands: [margaret.ning@fog.org.au](mailto:margaret.ning@fog.org.au)

Travelling stock reserves & Old Cooma Common:

[margaret.ning@fog.org.au](mailto:margaret.ning@fog.org.au)

Scottsdale monitoring: [linda.spinaze@fog.org.au](mailto:linda.spinaze@fog.org.au)

Ginninderry scrape monitoring:

[john.fitzgerald@fog.org.au](mailto:john.fitzgerald@fog.org.au)

Health & Safety: [info@fog.org.au](mailto:info@fog.org.au)

Correspondence:

Postal: PO Box 440, Jamison Centre, ACT 2614

Email: [secretary@fog.org.au](mailto:secretary@fog.org.au)

Payments & accounts: [treasurer@fog.org.au](mailto:treasurer@fog.org.au)  
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FoG committee, contact: [secretary@fog.org.au](mailto:secretary@fog.org.au)