



# News of Friends of Grasslands

Supporting native grassy ecosystems

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January & February 2026

## Activities

### Work Parties

*Gurubung Dhaura*

Sat 17 Jan & 21 Feb 2026

9-12:30pm, Jamie Pittock

*Budjan Galindji (Franklin Reserve)*

Wed 7 & 28 Jan, 4 & 25 Feb 2026;

9-11:30am. Margaret Ning

### Excursions

Rest time!!

### New members

Two new members have joined since 1 Nov. One from NSW and one from the ACT.

## President's report

Jamie Pittock, President, Friends of Grasslands

### *Prospects for grasslands at beginning of a new year*

In many respects, 2025 was a disappointing year for conservation of grassy ecosystems. Mid-year, Canberra Airport Group proceeded to construct their northern road, that bisects a key population of the critically endangered Canberra Grassland Earless Dragon. This did lead to a welcome decision by the ACT Government to invest more in captive breeding for the dragon. In most other respects, the ACT appears mired in endless planning processes with no clear conservation gains in sight.

The Eastern Broadacre Strategic Assessment and the Western Edge Investigation have been rolling on since 2018 in the back rooms of ACT Planning. There is no indication that the last large unreserved grasslands or woodlands on Canberra's urban fringe will be conserved in these forever planning exercises.

ACT Planning point to their adoption in the Territory Plan from 2023 of a "blue-green network", described as "A protected network of natural and semi-natural areas [...] vital in providing clean air, water and visual amenity to suburbs, serving as native plant and animal habitat and supporting liveability and community wellbeing. The network supports land uses that protect and enhance ecosystem function, maintaining intrinsic cultural value and capacity to mitigate current and future climate risks."

Superficially, this sounds similar to the FOG and ACT Conservation Council proposal for a "biodiversity network". Despite ACT Planning's fine rhetoric, their 'network' is replete with ambiguities. While centred on nature reserves, urban open space and waterbodies, no coherent legal protection nor coordinated management has been defined. Further, in the context of very limited management resources, no prioritisation for conservation of unreserved high conservation habitat is evident.

The re-elected ACT Government has said that in 2026 "We will appoint an ACT Government Landscape Architect and establish an office of the Landscape Architect to lead and develop a landscape plan

for the ACT. The Landscape Plan will build on the work of environment and planning directorates to ensure that our natural and urban environments thrive, and Canberra remains the bush capital and a city in a landscape.” The terms of reference of the Architect and Plan are yet to be made public. The relationship of the Landscape Plan to the Territory Plan and other planning processes has not been communicated. Further, there is no commitment to protection of unreserved areas of high ecological value for conservation.

In 2026, FOG will be focussing on protection of the last 3,000 or so hectares of high conservation value grasslands and woodlands in the northern ACT (more to come in the next FOG newsletter). We hope that the soon to be released review of the ACT Nature Conservation Strategy will result in ACT Government action to protect these remnants.

The ongoing loss of endangered natural temperate grasslands in NSW is a disgrace. We hope that in 2026 the NSW Government will further respond to the 2023 Ken Henry review by further reforming the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016. An early test of government commitment will be how it will reform the NSW Land Management (Native Vegetation) Code 2018 to better protect grasslands.

In 2026, the Federal Government succeeded in amending the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. Unfortunately, the high-level focus on matters like the powers of the new Environment Protection Authority and regulation of logging native forests means that little attention was given to the fine print on how threatened biodiversity could be more proactively conserved. In theory, the government’s commitment to better regulating clearing for agriculture should better conserve threatened grassy ecosystems. However, the devil will be in the detail of the implementing regulations and processes. In theory the provision for bioregional plans to better protect high conservation areas upfront to direct developers elsewhere should help conserve grassy ecosystems. However, these plans will take years to develop, the detailed procedure is not known, and it is unclear at this point if they would achieve more conservation than has been secured through the joint Commonwealth-ACT strategic assessments for the proposed expansion of Canberra.

We start 2026 with new opportunities in the ACT and NSW to advance the conservation of grassy ecosystems through these planning and regulatory reforms. Successful protection of unreserved habitats would lead to deconfliction of development versus conservation of the environment. It would enable environmentalists to focus on restoration and conservation rather than endless planning battles. It would free up the business sector and government to pursue their development objectives.

If you are willing and able to help FOG advance conservation measures through our Advocacy Committee, please contact me as we need your help.

Best wishes,  
Jamie Pittock, President

### ***FOG members, you are invited ...***

... to become more involved with FOG! Our ‘activities’ and ‘advocacy’ groups could both benefit from being able to call upon a larger pool of knowledge, skills and experience. For instance, you may know patches of native vegetation you would be willing to share with FOG groups. You may have ideas of interesting FOG-relevant activities.

You may have experience organising events and/or trips. You may have ecological knowledge – plant, soil, animal – relevant to grassy ecosystems. You may be interested in contributing to grassy ecosystem advocacy. Our hard-working FOG teams would welcome you joining them as a fellow volunteer, wherever you live, and however much time you have available. No need to be in the ACT region, and no need to be on the FOG committee.

Why not email [info@fog.org.au](mailto:info@fog.org.au)? We will follow up.

# Significant national environmental law reform PLUS soon a draft ACT Nature Conservation Strategy 2026-2036

*Matt Whitting*

National environmental law is fundamental to the protection of grassy ecosystems listed as threatened in our region and beyond. The Australian Parliament has just passed a package of reforms to the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Act)*, the first major changes to the Act in 25 years. FOG's comments on the reform package can be found [here](#) (where it is submission 158 on tab 9):

- The Federal Minister can now make national environmental standards ('Standards'). By 30 January, FOG will respond to the Federal Environment Department's invitation ([here](#)) to comment on the first two *draft* Standards. These are Standards for 'matters of national environmental significance' and 'offsets'.
- For the purposes of assessing and approving projects under the Act, the Minister can now accredit state and territory regimes that commit to making decisions that meet these Standards ... if satisfied that the relevant set of state and territory laws, regulations and policies are consistent with meeting these Standards and related requirements. Locally, the ACT Government's City and Environment Directorate has been busy drafting the next ACT Nature Conservation Strategy ('next Strategy').
- The next Strategy will replace the one that expired in 2023. Once in effect in late 2026, its implementation is expected to continue for ten years (2026-2036).
- Public comment is about to be invited on a draft of the next Strategy. When this happens, FOG will draft comment in the usual way, and everyone keen to get involved will be welcome to contribute.

The context for all these changes is relevant:

- As many readers will know, FOG and the Conservation Council ACT Region [outlined](#) our 'Biodiversity Network' concept in 2022. Since then, its lead author Sarah Sharp ([sarah.sharp@fog.org.au](mailto:sarah.sharp@fog.org.au)) has been working with officers from the ACT Government, rural lessees, community groups and others to clarify how the network concept could operate.
- If realised, the network will have a dual focus. Underlying direction will guide the management of all places of high conservation value on all ACT tenures outside Reserves. With consistent direction promoting the retention and restoration of conservation value, land managers will be free to get on with appropriate non-conflicting activities.
- Like the rest of the country, here in the ACT the deterioration of the natural and cultural environment must end. FOG encourages all land managers to commit to retaining and restoring conservation value while we all get on with tending gardens, producing food and fibre, sustaining cultural practices and providing for recreation in sustainable ways. Whatever programs are built into the next Strategy, to frame long-term thinking, these same land managers need an appropriate degree of certainty that the positive land management arrangements they establish will be able to continue.
- New programs have been proposed and are ramping up nationally, like the conserved area and nature repair initiatives. FOG looks forward to examining the draft of the next Strategy to see how these initiatives will be implemented here in the ACT. We are concerned to ensure that gains for nature and culture, delivered by committed land carers and land managers, will be captured for the long term. The outcomes *depend* on these gains being sustained.

# Mulloon Institute & Poplars Grassland Reserve

Margaret Ning

This summer FOG scheduled two 'revisit' activities, for two very different reasons.

## 1. The Mulloon Institute

Around a year ago, we heard there was the possibility of a patch of Natural Temperate Grassland (NTG) at Mulloon and we asked to visit the property to compile our own plant species list to see if it supported the NTG proposition.



Accordingly, on Friday 30 June 2025 we visited and identified 65 grassland and woodland plant species in a lovely corner of the farm (see *News of FOG 2025-07*). It definitely was NTG.

However, we all know that many more grassland species will emerge over the course of spring and summer, so we resolved to return to the property to complete the exercise.

I am pleased to say that on Friday 14 November a small group of us managed to add another 20 or so grassland and woodland species to our list. Thank you to Chris for enabling this re-visit.

On our way to and from the NTG we sighted some beautiful woodland and forest areas and were told we would be welcome to go back there and explore that area in future.

The accompanying images below show part of Mulloon on this visit, as well as a pink-flowered daisy family shrub (left) that I have not yet identified.

It looks like a pink Cassinia, and I actually saw a similar plant at nearby Schofield's TSR only two days later.

## 2. The Poplars Grassland Reserve

On Thursday 18 September, for the first time in around 10 years, FOG was privileged to visit this very special site (see *News of FOG 2025-11*) which has a huge Button Wrinklewort (BW) (*Rutidosis leptorhynchoides*) population as well as Canberra Grassland Earless Dragons. We observed on this visit that the BW was surrounded by visible patches of St John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*), and a handful of us from FOG and Queanbeyan Landcare offered our spraying services to one of the owners of the grassland to try to set the Wort back a little. Hence our revisit on Thursday 20 November.



It involved some fun and games to get our equipment over the 2m high fence that surrounds the site (see photo left: Carolyn Larcombe), but overall the area was better-off for the approximately 80 litres of herbicide that the sprayers put out.

The site had dried out considerably since our first visit, which also means the Wort is having a sorry season too. Thank you to the spray volunteers, and to Carolyn for hosting us for a second visit this season.

# Various vile weeds: Close-up

John Fitz Gerald

In my view, a lot of vile vegetation needs to be vaporized, or maybe vanquished. Readers could possibly guess from such a corny opening that my theme here is visiting species of which one name starts with the letter 'v'.



My first plant is Sweet Vernal Grass, *Anthoxanthum odoratum*. It is a shallow-rooted perennial, truly vile, and a serious weed of many places including both the grave-site block and the surrounding woodland at Hall Cemetery. Sadly at Hall this perennial C3 grass is steadily becoming more of a problem, having enjoyed the recent wet years.

The grass has now finished flowering and dropped its abundant seed, ready to grow again in spring next year. Downey considers it, in his 2022 assessment of naturalised alien plants, to be a high priority weed in the ACT. The species is native to Europe, western Asia and NW Africa. ALA lists 18,800 records, almost all in the SE temperate states, but a few from the temperate SW corner of WA.

My image here shows 6 dark hairy florets, each having a brown awn with one bend, plus a thinner bristle. The right side of the image shows 2 shiny flattened seeds that I've prised from other florets. The scale bar is 1mm long.

My next victim is *Vulpia bromoides* or Squirrel-tail Fescue. This is a small but pesky annual C3 grass. There are probably very few grassy areas in temperate Australia that don't have at least one of the *Vulpia* species. Sadly, this includes some of the valuable, high-diversity grasslands in the ACT familiar to FOG members - St Marks, Hall Cemetery and Yarramundi Grassland.

Downey assesses this weed as having moderate priority in the ACT. It is a prolific seeder which, like Sweet Vernal, has largely finished its growth this season and is drying off and releasing abundant seeds. It is difficult to manage being such a small plant which grows in close contact with other species that we prefer not to dig or herbicide; it has to be controlled before flowering as its seeds are easily dislodged once mature.



The species is native to temperate areas in Europe and N Africa. ALA lists 12,400 records in the SE and SW corners of our country. My image with scale bar of 1mm shows 3 thin florets; each is about 5mm long with an awn about twice that, longer than I could include in my micrograph. I peeled off an awn and lemma to position one channeled seed about 3mm long at the centre of my field of view.



My final species is *Vicia sativa ssp. nigra*, or Narrow-leaved Vetch. This is a scrambling annual herb in the pea group of flowering plants. It is a native of Europe, Asia and N Africa. I understand it is often sown by farmers as a nitrogen-fixing legume which is highly palatable to sheep and cattle. Unfortunately, its hard-coated seeds spread from farmland and it's a fairly common minor weed of native grassy areas.

Downey rates it as a low priority weed in the ACT. ALA lists 2,380 records, once again in the temperate SE and SW of our country, mainly across the SE. My image with scale bar of 1mm shows 7 seeds each 3mm diameter released from dark black pods. Seeds are hard-coated, near spherical and attractively patterned.

In closing, I hope that readers of this version of Close-up find it neither vague nor vacuous.

High magnification images were taken using the Nikon microscope at the National Seedbank in the Australian National Botanic Gardens. Images can be reproduced freely with reference to the Creative Commons licence CC BY

Information above was gathered from websites including:

Atlas of Living Australia - [www.ala.gov.au](http://www.ala.gov.au)

Plants Of the World Online – [powo.science.kew.org](http://powo.science.kew.org)

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### *Happy new year! Time to renew FOG membership*

Do we realise how *special* we are as FOG members, supporting native grassland conservation in our regions?

Without us, FOG wouldn't exist! FOG couldn't advocate on behalf of native grassy ecosystems. Members and colleagues would not be monitoring at Scottsdale (NSW) and Ginninderry scrape (ACT), or restoring grassland and grassy woodland areas at St Mark's (ACT), Budjan Galindji (ACT), Gurubang Dhaura and Blue Gum Point (ACT), Hall Cemetery woodland (ACT), and Top Hut TSR in the Monaro (NSW) ... and we would miss meeting FOG friends at the annual winter gathering!

Let's all renew our membership for 2026, soon, if we haven't already done so (\$30 for individuals/families/not-for profits; \$10 for concession-holders; \$60 for corporate bodies), and please send me the FOG [membership form](#) with your current details (even if you think they've not changed!).

Ann Milligan ([membership@fog.org.au](mailto:membership@fog.org.au))

# Hall Cemetery

*John Fitz Gerald*

The final work morning of 2025 was a bumper event - 14 volunteers put in 31 hours of work. Thanks to everyone. Special thanks to all new volunteers including Kinloch who fired up his whipper-snipper to tackle a field of Fog Grass invading alongside good vegetation.

The main boost this time was a new group of enthusiastic locals and we hope that they enjoyed the task enough to come back again. This time we did plenty of hand pulling of weeds in quality areas of the northern woodland but a spraying group led by Margaret also went to work on other parts to reduce the impacts of other unwanted plants.



*Above: the group at morning tea (photo: Marianne Albury-Colless)*



*Right: Coffs Harbour in NSW has The Big Banana. Well we've got The Big Dianella - as pictured here between Emily and Margaret in Hall Cemetery Woodland (photo and caption: Andrew Zelnik)*

As a thank you, and after morning tea, the group enjoyed a stroll through the cemetery-block grassland checking out many native flowering plants, mostly at their best, and included a quick peek at a couple of the *Prasophyllum* orchids for which this site has been protected.

*Canberra Memorial Parks is reviewing the future for Hall Cemetery.* The Hall community newsletter 'Rural Fringe' in its December edition, page 3, published a call from Canberra Memorial Parks to the community to comment on its possible extension of the operation of Hall Cemetery through expansion by approx 1 hectare to the east of the existing footprint. The Newsletter can be accessed [here](#) - select the December 2025 edition and go to its page 3. The piece about the future of the cemetery is a pointer to an online survey set up by Canberra Memorial Parks through which it will gauge community opinion. The survey is open until Feb 6, 2026 and FOG members are encouraged to respond. Note that the survey link embedded in the article is not fully functional - readers instead should open this [link](#).

Thanks to Greg Palethorpe, owner of Farmer Brown's Free Range Eggs, for keeping FOG updated about this process since mid 2023. Not surprisingly, he is concerned about possible resumption of this part of his lease which is Box-Gum Woodland showing vigorous regrowth of saplings though with a low quality native groundlayer.

# South-eastern Brown Treecreeper, *Climacteris picumnus victoriae*, a vulnerable woodlands bird

Michael Bedingfield

The Brown Treecreeper is endemic to Australia and regarded as common. It occurs throughout most of NSW, Queensland and Victoria and spreads into eastern South Australia. It goes by the scientific name of *Climacteris picumnus*.



But there are three subspecies. There is the North-eastern Brown Treecreeper *Climacteris picumnus picumnus* that prefers the arid country of eastern Australia. The Cape York Brown Treecreeper, *C.p. melanotus* is limited to the northern parts of Queensland. The other subspecies is the South-eastern Brown Treecreeper, *C.p. victoriae*. It occurs mainly in eastern NSW but also into eastern Victoria and southeast Queensland. In NSW it occurs along the tablelands and western slopes, but is less common along the coast. It does not occur in the drier and flatter inland regions. It is classified as vulnerable in NSW, Victoria, Queensland and the ACT as well as Australia as a whole. Through central NSW the two subspecies *C.p. victoriae* and *C.p. picumnus* grade into each other. The subspecies that occurs in the Canberra region is *C.p. victoriae* and is our main subject.

The South-eastern Brown Treecreeper is the common name used by the CSIRO on their Atlas of Living Australia page. The NSW Government has the name Brown Treecreeper (eastern subspecies) on its threatened species page. I've chosen the former common name here because it reads better. This bird is Australia's largest treecreeper, being 15cm to 18cm from bill to tail tip. It is grey-brown in colour with an off-white eyebrow, black, white and brown streaking on the abdomen and black bars on the underside of the tail. The throat and upper breast are off-white, there is a dark line through the eye and the crown is grey-brown. This species is gregarious and usually found in pairs or small groups that are noisy and active. The main call is a loud, ringing,

often repeated 'pink' or 'spink', and sometimes a series of loud descending notes.

These birds are found in eucalypt woodlands, including Box-gum Woodlands, savannah and dry open forests. Undisturbed native woodlands are preferred, especially with rough-barked eucalypts, such as stringy barks and box gums, with an open structure and grassy understorey which includes a few shrubs. It is also found in mallee country and River Red Gum forests with an open understorey. For foraging it likes the presence of fallen timber. In NSW the population has

declined significantly over much of its range especially on the northern and southern tablelands and central NSW. Declines are quite noticeable in remnant vegetation with fragments of less than 300 hectares that have been isolated for over 50 years.

Brown Treecreepers forage both in trees and on the ground, looking for insects and other invertebrates, mostly ants, but including spiders, insect larvae, moths, beetles, cockroaches, termites, etc. Ants are favoured and make up about 80% of their diet. They will also eat nectar from some eucalypts and paperbarks, eucalypt sap and small lizards. They like foraging in the trees. They probe and poke into cracks, crevices and under peeling bark, hopping along logs or spiralling up tree trunks. On the ground they search among the tussocks, leaf litter and fallen timber. They tend to spend more time searching for food on the ground and among fallen logs than other treecreepers do, giving about equal time to terrestrial and arboreal activity.

They are sedentary and breeding occurs from July to February, but mainly in September and October. During this time one or occasionally two broods may be raised. They build their nests in hollows in standing live or dead trees or old stumps. These hollows are necessary for breeding. The nests are made with grass, bark and other materials and lined with fur and feathers. They breed cooperatively in groups of up to about eight birds, with territories overlapping with other breeding groups. The breeding pair normally form a long-term monogamous relationship and are usually accompanied by one or more males. Breeding success is much better when there are helpers. The non-breeding assistants may contribute to the raising of chicks in two or three neighbouring nests as well. All members of the group contribute to the feeding of the chicks. Fledging occurs after 21 to 26 days. Females disperse after winter looking for a new territory in which to breed. The males generally stay in the home territory for a while and may eventually mate with a female close to where they were born.

The major contribution to the decline of the South-eastern Brown Treecreeper is land clearing with the loss and fragmentation of natural habitat. Habitat degradation is also significant, from overgrazing and the spread of invasive weed species. Fragmentation severely affects dispersal and therefore successful long-term breeding. They are also affected by the removal of woody debris and competition for scarce nesting hollows. Strategies to improve their future requires reversal of these trends.

The story of the decline of the South-eastern Brown Treecreeper is quite familiar, since more than a few native bird species are similarly affected. However, there is hope for their future. The NSW and ACT Government references describe the activities required to assist this species. The continued efforts of FOG to promote the protection and enhancement of grassy woodlands will hopefully benefit the South-eastern Brown Treecreeper as well.

Main references:

<https://threatenedspecies.bionet.nsw.gov.au/profile?id=10171>

<https://www.act.gov.au/environment/animals-and-plants/act-threatened-species/brown-treecreeper-climacteris-picumnus-victoriae>

<https://bie.ala.org.au/species/https://biodiversity.org.au/afd/taxa/5f79ff26-59bf-42f4-9a7b-d493b3951974>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brown\\_treecreeper](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brown_treecreeper)

# Introducing the Canberra Nature Map Association and invitation to join

*Michael Bedingfield*

Friends of Grasslands has been a strong supporter of Canberra Nature Map, and many FOG members contribute to this website. So I am hoping that this good relationship will continue.

The Canberra Nature Map Association (CNMA) has been created to support the website of Canberra Nature Map (CNM) and the community of people who moderate and contribute to it. The Association activities are likely to include the publication of the newsletter, giving technical advice, field-day visits and surveys, social events, identification workshops, school and other community events and moderator group meetings. The Association is also able to apply for funding for environmental education and conservation management purposes.

However, since NatureMapr will cease operations for the Canberra and Southern Tablelands in the financial year 2029-2030, we have to be prepared for big changes in how we operate. So the Association will be working with CNM contributors to facilitate this transition. The Association does not have any involvement with the running or funding of the NatureMapr platform. That is the role of Aaron Clausen's private company.

The people who are on the current committee are President: Michael Bedingfield, Treasurer: Michael Mulvaney, Secretary: Emma Collins. Other Committee members are Kim Pullen, Ian Baird, Stuart Harris, Ciaran Ernst-Russell, Yumi Callaway. This committee also represents Canberra Nature Map ParkCare Group. The committee membership and positions will be up for re-election at the AGM. Further information will be sent out to members later.

In the meantime the committee is developing a strategy to enable CNM to continue after NatureMapr closes down. A likely possibility is that the data of approving CNM contributors could be transferred to iNaturalist. We may also develop a separate website to retain as much of the knowledge as we can of the 9,600 species to have been identified for the Canberra region. We also hope to keep the field guides for the region and the many nature reserves and other places. We also hope this new website will have a strong focus on communication with, and support of, the CNM community.

We are still in the planning stage and cannot be specific about what we will do. However, keeping the CNM community together and retaining the knowledge of local fauna and flora is a high priority. Members of the Association will also be able to get assistance in making a transition to the new platform.

We intend to have the first AGM of the Association in February or early March 2026. Confirmed members of the Association will receive direct but periodic correspondence about the Association's activities. Ideally we would like all moderators and as many contributors as possible to be members of the Association and for some of them to assist in the transition and in any community events. To become a member and be able to vote at the AGM you need to send a 'yes I want to be a member' message to [secretary.cnnn@gmail.com](mailto:secretary.cnnn@gmail.com)

The Association needs CNM members to put their hands up to assist in the work of looking after the project and its future evolution. At this stage the most important thing for people to do is to register as mentioned above if you wish to be a member of the new Association. I hope that those of you who are contributors to CNM will take this opportunity.

# Advocacy Report

*Matt Whitting.*

Summaries by month in reverse chronological order

## *December*

### *Monaro Rock Quarry Project, 9/12*

As was reported in the Nov-Dec Newsletter, on 19 Sep 2025, FOG commented on the Environmental Impact Statement for this proposal, which accounted for impacts in NSW; that was a submission to the NSW Government's Major Projects Team. In [the current submission](#), FOG and the Conservation Council responded jointly to the proponent's referral under the EPBC Act, addressing the direct and indirect impacts expected in both NSW and the ACT. Given the quarry would clear over 23 ha of critically endangered Box Gum Woodland, and around 55 additional hectares of grassy forest, meaning a total of around 78 ha would be lost to bird and mammal species listed as threatened, we recommended that the proposal be determined 'clearly unacceptable'.

### *Comment on the Controlled Native Species Management Plan ([Draft](#)): Eastern Grey Kangaroo, 8/12*

FOG expressed strong support for the draft ([here](#)), including the sensitive approach to balancing the welfare of individual animals with the social, ecological and human welfare issues created by culling to reduce kangaroo abundance within the ACT urban, peri-urban and rural environment. FOG supported: the protection of other environmental values; the need to consider total grazing pressure; the proposed culling methods; the inclusion of an evaluation and reporting schedule; the incorporation of Ngunnawal knowledge, cultural values and practices including cultural and other non-commercial uses of Buru carcasses; the inclusion of background information on past culls, ecology and other key information; and identification of the need to undertake surveys in conservation areas outside CNP and on rural land.

### *Comment on the Environment Protection Reform Bills, 5/12*

FOG commented on the reforms to national environmental law after they had passed the Parliament ([here](#), where it is submission 158 on tab 9). We took the opportunity to set out matters we supported and our recommendations, some of which were addressed in the final negotiation of a deal between Labor and the Greens. Noting that, after the Bills passed through Parliament, the Inquiry turned its mind to the making of National Environmental Standards, FOG took the opportunity to set out some key concerns with the Draft Offset Standard.

## *November*

### *FOG representatives attended the Biodiversity Conservation Forum, 20/11*

FOG members Sarah Sharp and Julia Raine attended the above Forum, convened quarterly to bring together community and government representatives to share, consult and collaborate on protecting and enhancing the ACT's natural environment. This Forum is now a formalised group with a new name and clear terms of reference, the Nature Conservation Forum. Matters discussed included the management of weeds and the impacts of climate change leading to a new Climate Strategy for the ACT.

### *Comment on development proposed at 722 Canberra Ave Jerrabomberra, DA202544243, 17/11*

FOG commented on this proposal on 1 August ([here](#)). The proposal has been determined to be 'Significant DA' meaning a second stage of comment is invited giving the public the opportunity to see how the proponent has responded. In FOG's Stage 2 comment ([here](#)), we note there have been some changes to the original design, however, the fundamental issue remains. If it is approved and proceeds this proposal will have significant direct and indirect impacts on one of Australia's most important remnants of Natural Temperate Grassland.

### *The proposed rezoning of Lot 2 DP1144979 Wallaroo Road, Yass Valley Shire (Lot 2), 4/11*

The permanent protection and management of Lot 2 is an offset accepted for impacts to Golden Sun Moth (GSM) in Jaramlee Nature Reserve (Jaramlee NR). Jaramlee NR is itself an offset, i.e., the permanent protection and management of Jaramlee NR was an offset for the impacts to GSM of urban development at Lawson South and MacGregor West.

In a submission to Yass Valley Council, FOG and the Conservation Council explained (jointly, [here](#)) that we do not consider C3 zoning, 'environmental management', is the appropriate zoning. Zoning Lot 2 as C3 would 'provide for a limited range of development that does not have an adverse effect on those values'. We explained our view that the appropriate zoning would be C2 'environmental conservation'. FOG expressed vehement opposition to the proposal to include 'Electricity Generating Works' as an additional permitted use on Lot 2 in the event that FOG's position is not accepted.

### *Canberra Grassland Earless Dragon Recovery Team - Inaugural Meeting, 4/11*

Matt Whitting is representing FOG on this Recovery Team, joining policy makers with ecologists and local land managers including Defence and Canberra Airport. This first meeting was largely procedural, i.e., the terms of reference were reviewed and a framework for decisions established.

## *October*

### *Comment on draft Cemeteries Management Plan and Masterplan (Yass Valley Shire, NSW), 30/10*

Yass Valley Council is the custodian of a number of cemeteries that contain extremely high conservation value grassy ecosystems including Box-Gum Woodland and Natural Temperate Grassland. FOG and the Conservation Council expressed concern jointly ([here](#)) that the draft Plan does not contain clear, cemetery-specific objectives or detailed management prescriptions to protect and manage these values inside the Council cemeteries' boundaries. We outlined how the issues should be addressed. In summary, that would be by updating mapping and undertaking works as directed by a qualified ecologist.

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## Perunga Grasshoppers on Hill Reserve

### *Anna Cowan*

*Perunga ochracea* or the "cross-dressing grasshopper", is a threatened species with a small range (ACT and immediate surrounds). It has small wings and is flightless but has a strong jump of up to 1 metre. It often has a cross on its thorax, and is varied in colour: often grey or brown in dry years but green in wetter years. It feeds on various forbs and uses grass tufts for shelter. In 2024 it was found on Hill Reserve in Ngunnawal following a prescribed burn.

On 1 November 2025, eight volunteers spent one of the warmer spring afternoons wandering Hill Reserve to investigate whether it was still present at the site; this area is natural temperate grassland with Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda triandra*), Wallaby Grass (*Rytidosperma carphoides*), Wheatgrass (*Anthosachne scabra*), Speargrasses (*Austrostipa scabra* and *bigeniculata*) and *Bothriochloa macro* among the grasses identified. The species list of grasses and forbs was ~35 with many of the common ACT species present. Unfortunately, Hill Reserve is somewhat neglected with African Lovegrass, St John's Wort, Chilean Needlegrass and wild oats (*Avena sp.*) infestations as well as a rabbit population.

No *Perunga* were found near the burn site, but at least six *Perunga* were found located at one of the sites identified in 2024: this area was notable in that there were intermittent grass tufts rather than a continuous cover of longer grasses. Whether the grasshoppers were only present at this site or were easier to see because of the lower, less-continuous cover remains open. The participants also spent time enjoying the casual walk, photographing native bees on the *Wahlenbergia luteola*, birdwatching and creating a species list for the use of local residents.

# Superb range of woodland flora species

Ann Milligan, David McDonald (*Friends of Wamboin*), Margaret Ning

October 2025. Was there rain at the right time, or is this an extra good year for native flowers? FOG was lucky enough to be invited to two walks in NSW woodland this October – one each side of ACT's 'nose', Both areas *abounded* with native flowers, including several species of orchids – and birds!

Carwoola Landcare and Friends of Wamboin Crown Reserve, respectively, organised the walks at Stony Creek Nature Reserve on Captains Flat Road, Carwoola (12 October) and Wamboin Crown Reserve, off Bingley Road, Wamboin (19 October). Both were well attended by local landholders and a few FOG members. Earlier reconnaissance by Margaret, Ann and Andrew, combined with Bill Willis's comprehensive ANPS species list for Stony Creek, helped with the preparation.

Walks such as these, in areas rich in native species, are ideal opportunities for learning plant and tree names. You spot a flower, call to Margaret or Andrew or Bill or other FOG expert, and they come and tell you about it, right there! (Photos in ID books are also excellent, of course.)

Plant highlights at Stony Creek Nature Reserve included Hoary Sunrays (*Leucochrysum albicans*), and egg and bacon flowers of *Pultenaea procumbens*. Pretty Early Nancies (*Wurmbea dioica*), male and female (the flowers differ), were everywhere. There were numerous golden discs of *Microseris walterii* (Yam Daisy); yellow-with-red *Bossiaea prostrata* flowers glowing underfoot; beautifully fluffy Coronidiums standing proudly pale yellow; deep purply-red leaves of *Ajuga australis* with quite large mauve blooms; bright blobs of Billy Buttons; and, of course, the orchids! Photos here show *Caladenia major* and *Arachnorchis* sp., and *Plantago*, *Brachyscome*, *Comesperma*, *Viola*, *Bossiaea* and Early Nancy.



Left & centre: *Caladenia major* and *Arachnorchis* sp (Margaret Ning), Right: male Early Nancy (Ann Milligan)

At Wamboin Crown Reserve, which is a 59 ha area of Southern Tablelands Brittle Gum/Red Stringybark forest, there were both bird and plant highlights. Local birders Paul Downey and David McDonald helped participants identify 29 bird species, including three species of spring/summer migrant cuckoos, and the Scarlet Robin which is classified as a vulnerable species in NSW. Meanwhile, Margaret and others in the group noted around 100 plant species, including Leopard Orchid (*Diuris* sp., Bearded Orchid (*Calochilus robertsonii*) and Tiger Orchid (*Diuris sulphurea*), Curved Riceflower (*Pimelea curviflora*), Hairy Speedwell (*Veronica calycina*), Woodrush (*Luzula densiflora*), Twiggy Knawel (*Scleranthus fasciculatus*), Small-leaved Clematis (*Clematis leptophylla*), and lots of others, as well as species also seen at Stony Creek.

Overall, for plant (and bird) enthusiasts these few hours in such biodiversity hotspots were remarkable! Thank you to the leaders of both groups, as well as to Margaret, Andrew and Bill.

# Golden Sun Moth Monitoring at Budjan Galindji Grassland Nature Reserve

*Margaret Ning*

Our 26 November Budjan Galindji work party began normally, pulling out Wild Oats and other undesirable weeds. At 10am, however, we changed our focus when the four-person Golden Sun Moth (GSM) monitoring team from Parks and Conservation arrived to show us what they do in the course of a normal day's work.

At this time of the year, the male GSMs fly around 50cm or so above ground level, in warm temperatures, preferably in wind-free conditions, seeking female moths to mate with. Female GSMs have highly visible (to male GSMs) golden lower wings - see first image below. The second (very bad) image is of a male GSM that we spotted before the monitoring team arrived.

We formed four teams and set off in different parts of Budjan Galindji, including our own small south-east pocket. The idea was to walk in straight lines, looking for and counting, any male moths that were seen. The total number of transects was 17 (each was 100m long). I am pleased to report that eight males were sighted in our 1.5ha pocket, although the other teams were less lucky, as the total count was 12.

Thank you to Jenna and her monitoring team for showing us how they do their job, and for making us a lot more aware of the importance of our own patch in their results.



*Image 1: Gordon McAllister - female GSM at Magpie Hill in Lyneham*



*Image 2: Margaret Ning - male GSM at Budjan Galindji*

## Snakes Alive!

Join us for live displays, feeding and handling of snakes, lizards, frogs, turtles and more this summer.

**Mon to Sun**  
**12-18 Jan 2026**

Mornings: 10am to 11am | 11.30am to 12.30pm  
Afternoons: 1pm to 2pm | 2.30pm to 3.30pm  
Tickets: Adult \$9, Concession \$8, Child \$7



For booking and details visit  
[parksaustralia.gov.au/botanic-gardens](https://parksaustralia.gov.au/botanic-gardens)



# Below Our Knees: Exploring Our Grasslands

*David Johnson*

Friends of Grasslands recently partnered with South East Local Land Services (SE LLS), two Landcare groups (Yass Area Network and Upper Shoalhaven) and Dr Sonia Graham from University of Wollongong (UOW) to present a grasslands workshop, on Saturday 15 November. Topics included appreciating native grasslands, management requirements, and collaborative approaches for management in highly divided rural residential landscapes.

Landowners in these areas have a wide range of reasons for buying rural property, often not business or agriculture related, and many new owners lack knowledge about grasslands, their value, and how to manage them. This results in inconsistent management practices across the landscape, including varying levels of diligence and neglect, which make landscape-wide problems such as weeds and rabbits difficult to manage effectively. The Landcare coordinators agreed to organise the workshop, and they were able to secure support and funding from SE LLS to run this workshop, and possibly one or two follow-up workshops early next year.

The workshop was split over two locations in Bywong, a rural residential locality within 'the Canberra bubble', just over the border in NSW, an area of interest for FOG. The opening field sessions were held at Schofield's TSR, chosen for its splendid array of wildflowers - which persist despite an abundance of woody intruders - and its proximity to the Bywong Community Hall, where group discussion sessions were held.

Organisers bravely defied forecasts of rain and potential storms to stay with Plan A, and 33 registered participants, plus organisers and presenters, met at the TSR on the morning of the event. All were advised to bring raincoats, and presenters prepared for indoor sessions in case conditions forced a switch to Plan B. Everyone was understandably relieved to find perfect conditions at the TSR that morning, and combined with coffee and cakes to welcome attendees, the day was off to a perfect start.



Once welcomes and housekeeping were done, Sue McIntyre (FOG) started proceedings with an inspiring talk on the ecology of grasslands, the importance of perennial species, and key threats like fertility, excess biomass, and weeds. She then led a relaxed walk and talk / plant ID session through the TSR with support from Margaret Ning (FOG) and David Johnson (FOG).



Still at the TSR, LLS weeds extension officers then gave a comprehensive talk on management and strategies for controlling common weed species, as well as clarifying some regulatory issues that people are often not sure about. The Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council's weeds officer, based in Bungendore, also provided a local perspective on managing weeds on private properties in the area.



At 11am, attendees made their way to the Community Hall to hear from Sonia and engage in a group session during which attendees living within the same area could share barriers and opportunities for dealing with weeds affecting native grasslands on their properties. In the meantime, Margaret manned the FOG bookstand and provided handouts and information to people wanting to know more about FOG. The event ended with a sandwich/wrap style lunch provided by LLS before attendees departed from around 1pm and Landcare restored the hall to its normal state.

*Photos by Sonia Graham (1, 4, 5 and 6), Margaret Ning (2), and Claudia Munera (3), numbering from left to right, top to bottom.*

The Yass Landcare group has also written their account of this excursion. That report is available [here](#).

# News Roundup

Paul Archer

## Budjan – Minister Orr opens new pathways and signage 2 November 2025

The following article appeared on the FOG Facebook page on 12 November 2025:

Minister Suzanne Orr, Uncle Wally Bell, & Michaela Watts PCS, officially opened the new community engagement pathways and signage at Budjan Galindji Nature Reserve this morning, in front of a gathering of PCS staff and volunteers.

FOG stalwart [Margaret Ning](#) has managed the ParkCare volunteer group for several years as well as spending hundreds of hours spot spraying, & shout out also to Geoff Robertson who facilitated having the block declared a reserve, and Matt K, Andrew Z, Fay W and many others who have helped with weed management.



The opening was also covered in an article in Region Canberra on 15 November 2025 (James Coleman). [This article](#) (link provided by Jamie Pittock) includes the history of the site, information on recent works that have been undertaken as well as comments from Ministers Orr and Cheyne.

## *New book*

Link provided by Jamie Pittock

'Endangered Grasslands' by KA Raulings explains how our beautiful native temperate grasslands of south-eastern Australia have been impacted by colonisation and why they need rescuing. By referencing the latest research and with a plant directory of over 50 species, the book covers restoration strategies and current uses. Further information is available [here](#)

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## *Buyer beware - what's really in your weedkiller?*

Reproduced with permission of the author Helen Young, published in 'The Weekend Australian Magazine' 1 November 2025. Information provided by John Fitz Gerald.

*Although the Roundup brand and glyphosate have been synonymous for many years, that's not the case anymore. You'll need to read the labels of Roundup and other herbicides carefully, and have a bit of knowledge, to understand what you're buying. While Roundup Super Concentrate is just glyphosate, Roundup Total is also a non-selective herbicide that claims to be systemic, ie it gets inside the plant and kills the roots. Instead of glyphosate, it contains nonanoic acid (a fast knockdown that is used in organic weedkillers such as Slasher), plus fluazifop, (a specific herbicide for grasses), and fluroxypyr (for broadleaf weeds). However, Roundup Tough contains both glyphosate and triclopyr, the latter being a very potent herbicide usually sold as blackberry and tree killer. The Roundup Regular, Path and Fast versions all contain both glyphosate and nonanoic acid, while Roundup Natural has only nonanoic acid, so has no systemic action. Roundup for Lawns contains MCPA and dicamba, herbicides that kill broadleaf weeds but not lawn grasses. Check details at [www.roundup.com.au](http://www.roundup.com.au). Glyphosate, which is not banned in Australia, is also sold under other brand names such as Zero and Weed Kill. However, Zero Triple Strike is Yates' glyphosate-free, systemic weedkiller variant.*

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## *Symonston business park proposal*

Link provided by Jamie Pittock.

'Region Canberra' reported on 26 November 2025 (Ian Bushnell) that "a proposal for a major business park in Symonston is facing opposition on multiple fronts, including that it threatens endangered grassland and animals". The full report is available [here](#).

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## *Gazania on the move*

Link provided by several members.

ABC News reported on 5 November 2025 that "farmers, environmental groups and researchers are calling for national regulation to ban the sale of the highly invasive weed gazania at nurseries. Gazania has spread into paddocks, making some grain production farmland unviable". The full article is available [here](#)

Gazanias have been recognised as an environmental weed in Victoria (all subspecies), Queensland, Tasmania and New South Wales (*Gazania rigens*). South Australia has banned their sale, but they can still be found in nurseries outside the state. They are not only overrunning roadsides, native grasslands and coastlines but have also invaded paddocks in South Australia, Victoria and parts of Western Australia, making productive farmland unviable and causing significant economic losses.

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## Volunteers needed

Link provided by John Fitz Gerald

The Centre for Invasive Species Solutions (CISS) is looking for volunteers to help build WeedScan 2.0 — Australia’s next-generation weed identification app: “We’ve nearly doubled the number of species to around 950 plants and gathered over 900,000 images to train our AI system. Before training begins, we need your help to review and tidy this massive image dataset — filtering out low-quality or incorrect images so the AI can learn to identify weeds accurately. If you’re detail-oriented, reasonably tech-savvy, and can spare a few solid days (or even a week or two) over the next month, we’d love your help!

You can join us remotely from anywhere in Australia (provided you have a laptop, reliable access to the internet and your own Google or Microsoft account) or in person at our Canberra office. Training and support are provided — and you’ll get a sneak peek of WeedScan 2.0 before launch! Interested? Email [lucy.webster@invasives.com.au](mailto:lucy.webster@invasives.com.au) with the subject line ‘WeedScan 2.0 Volunteer’”.

## Contributions welcome

*Do you have a story from your favourite grassland or grassy woodland that you would like to share?*

*If so, please contact the Editor: [newsletter@fog.org.au](mailto:newsletter@fog.org.au)*

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**Late October 2025 Top Hut TSR, Dry Plain NSW.** On an otherwise overcast, cold, windy and eventually wet day this band of yellow flowers comprising hundreds of flowering Billy Buttons (*Craspedia variabilis*) and a sprinkling of Common Buttercups brightened the day for our FOG work party as did other native wildflower sightings elsewhere on the TSR. Interspersed amongst them were Scaly Buttons, Common Everlastings, threatened Mauve Burr Daisy, Many-flowered Knawel, Native Plantain and other forb species yet to flower or in the process of flowering.

This was in the east (aka north or non-fireshed) paddock along a relatively short segment of what was left of a 4m wide entire perimeter fire break, originally mown for an ecological burn which eventually took place in October 2024 (see 2024 Annual Report). It was pleasing to see wildflowers on display despite evidence of grazing from recent repeated incursions of the neighbour's cattle (see Top Hut TSR progress report in previous newsletter). The cattle had pushed through a weak section of boundary fence in search of the more abundant and palatable native ground cover being maintained in the TSR. This not previously observed action by the cattle, and the rarely observed drying out of Back Creek in the TSR over at least the first half of the year, demonstrates how dry a year 2025 has been in this part of the Monaro - a reminder of why it is called Dry Plain! **Image & text: Andrew Zelnik**