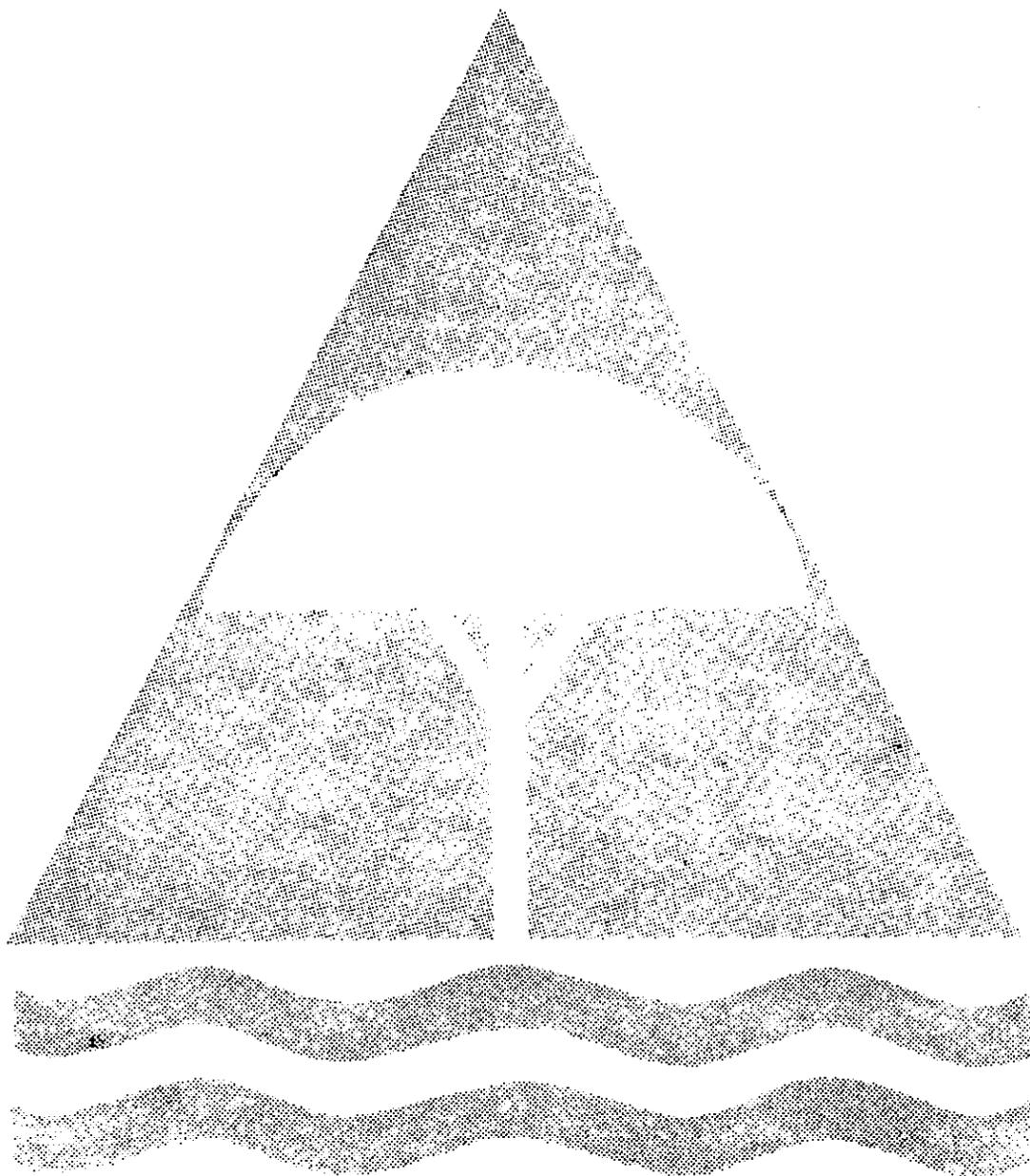


NPA Bulletin

National Parks Association of the A.C.T. Inc.



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NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF THE A.C.T. INC.

"A National Park for the National Capital"

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AIMS AND OBJECTS OF THE ASSOCIATION

- * Promotion of National Parks and of measures for the protection of fauna and flora, scenery and natural features in the Australian Capital Territory and elsewhere, and the reservation of specific areas.
- * Interest in the provision of appropriate outdoor recreation areas.
- * Stimulation of interest in, and appreciation and enjoyment of, such natural phenomena by organized field outings, meetings or any other means.
- * Co-operation with organizations and persons having similar interests and objectives.
- * Promotion of and education for nature conservation and the planning of land-use to achieve conservation.

EDITORIAL

There has been a change in the committee. For various reasons I have had to drop out of committee work and Jan Kiek has stepped into the breach. Being editor seems to take up more time than the committee did, but I'll try to keep going in this job for a while longer.

At the time of going to press, three months have elapsed since the first Fox uranium inquiry was published. I expect that the bulk of people in Australia were like me and listened to the news and read the newspaper reports. Those who looked at the actual report would be in the minority. Do you remember those headlines? URANIUM: IT'S YES, WAY OPEN TO URANIUM SALE, URANIUM: CAUTIOUS YES and so on.

The British Journal New Scientist took a look at the Fox report (18 Nov. 1976) and examines some of the conclusions. There are sixteen findings of the report and the media reaction seems to be based on the first two alone. These are "(1) the hazards of mining and milling uranium, if those activities are properly regulated and controlled, are not such as to justify a decision not to develop Australian uranium mines; (2) the hazards involved in the ordinary operations of nuclear power reactors, if those operations are properly regulated and controlled, are not such as to justify a decision not to mine and sell Australian uranium".

According to the New Scientist "neither of these findings can be strictly interpreted as a recommendation to mine and export; they merely assert that the circumstances stated give no reason not to".

The remaining findings warn of the hazards involved and the controls which may be necessary. It would seem that the Australian press has opted for the sensational approach. The danger of course is that URANIUM; YES might become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Readers may accept the headline as fact and feel that public debate is of no value. The New Scientist hopes that "the Australian media will go back to the Fox Report for a longer, less cursory look". Even if it does there is no doubt that the headlines have created a bias in favour of mining and power stations.

While we are on this topic, it is only fair to say that there are some very good reasons to move into nuclear power and both sides must be given a hearing. What I find worrying is the attitude of some of the nuclear protagonists. We are told that there has been no danger in the past so how can there be any future danger? This is a poor argument on two grounds; in the future there may be many more power stations and so the potential hazards must increase. Secondly, the track record for nuclear power is fairly good, but it has not been perfect. Here are a few cases in point:

In America at least three nuclear plants are on or close to severe earthquake faults.

In 1971 the US Atomic Energy Commission considered the emergency cooling systems in eight plants to be inadequate.

In 1972 a previously unrecognized problem - the shrinkage of uranium fuel elements - was found in ten plants.
In 1973 there were 861 "abnormal" occurrences at the 42 existing American plants.
In 1974 there were 1,421 incidents (National Wildlife, Oct/Nov. 1976).
In 1975 seven minor fires in a Tennessee nuclear plant were not reported. The plant has been out of action for a year after a more serious fire. The plant authorities had been warned of the fire hazard but had taken no action. (Environment 18 No.7, 1976)
Drums of low-level radioactive waste dumped in the Atlantic and Pacific from 1946 to 1970 have been found to be leaking into the seabed (The Sciences May/June 1976).

To return to the Fox inquiry, it is obvious that proper regulations and controls are essential. None of the above-mentioned incidents has led to any disasters or hazards, but so long as they continue, the thinking public will remain sceptical and unconvinced of the value of nuclear energy. It is up to the supporters of nuclear power to demonstrate future safety precautions not to take a somewhat arrogant "we know what is best" approach.

N.H.M.

CLEVER SPIDERS?

It seems that the average orb-web spider is an expert in insect taxonomy. If a butterfly or moth is caught in the web, the spider will rush out, bite the prey, then wrap it in silk. If, on the other hand, the trapped insect is a tougher customer, such as a grasshopper, then it is well wrapped first and then bitten.

Recent experiments have shown that spiders which have been reared in the laboratory and never seen either a moth or a grasshopper, will still react correctly, wrapping or biting grasshoppers, and biting and wrapping moths.

This shows the behaviour is instinctive but no-one has yet shown how the moths or grasshoppers are recognized. Research work is continuing and, who knows, one day the spider's secret will be revealed!

TRAIL-BIKES

Last year it was reported in the Canberra Times that the ACT Police would be posting regular patrols mounted on Honda trail-bikes. These patrols would be looking for unregistered trail-bikes and unlicensed riders in public and private areas of the ACT.

At present, areas at Page, Narrabundah and Stromlo Forest are set aside for trail-bike riding. Riders using other areas are breaking the law.

What are the dangers of excessive trail-bike riding? One major irritant is noise - this can be over 100 decibels. Noise levels of greater than 70 decibels can impair hearing, and certainly the volume of trail-bike noise can cause irritation even at some distance.

Another danger is the hazard to pedestrians and horse riders, especially in areas where poor visibility added to the speed of the bikes can be dangerous.

Trail-bikes and other off-road vehicles can also be a fire hazard in Australian conditions. Excessive use of fire tracks, not designed for a large volume of traffic, have made some unusable and sparks from faulty exhausts are sufficient to cause fires in dry areas.

However, the major effect of trail-bikes and similar vehicles is the impact on the environment. In America, there are some seven million off-road vehicles and their impact is becoming a cause for major concern. In a report in the July/August '76 issue of the Sierra Club Bulletin, it is stated that the trail network in the grass covered hills in Los Angeles County can be seen from 30,000 feet. It is claimed that the damage which has been done to some of the fragile desert soils will still be apparent hundreds of years from now. In an experiment an area disked and traversed by a tractor for several hours took seven years of seeding before plant growth was restored.

Coming back to the ACT again, the setting aside of reserves seems to be a step in the right direction. The 120 ha in Stromlo Forest is large enough to meet the needs of most trail-bike riders. This removes them from conflict with other outdoors users. The impact on the reserve has been severe however. Wide areas of ground cover have vanished. Two quagmires and an erosion gully have formed. Naturally these have offered a greater challenge to riders and so this local damage is aggravated. Finally, as mentioned above, compaction is severe and re-vegetation is very slow.

In conclusion, reserves for trail-bikes are seen to be essential but they must be expendable areas as massive destruction of fauna and flora can be expected and recovery will be measured in decades.

BELL THE CAT

Canberra, like all other cities, has a local population of feral cats. The impact of cats on the Australian environment is not generally known but it must be a significant one. Quite apart from the wild cats, which must kill to survive, there are thousands of house cats which are well fed and looked after. Even a well fed cat will hunt and their impact on wildlife is undoubtedly great.

Here is a list of known kills by such a well loved pet living in a Sydney bushland suburb from 1969 to 1975:

22 wattle birds, 3 little wattle birds, 7 peewees, 2 fan-tailed cuckoos, 4 common mynahs, 2 grey thrushes, 3 yellow winged honeyeaters, 3 white-eared honeyeaters, 1 eastern spinebill, 1 grey butcher bird, 5 rats (various species), 1 mouse, 1 bat, 3 bluetongue lizards, 5 skinks, 1 tiger snake, 3 frogs and many insects.

Is it possible to be a cat lover and a nature lover at the same time? One answer to the question is to give pussy a collar and bell.

SPERM WHALE REPRIEVED?

The Sperm Whale has been hunted to near-extinction for the sake of the ton or so of oil each carries in its head. This oil is very stable at high pressure and temperature; it is in great demand for use in machines of all kinds. It cannot be manufactured and to date the whale has been the only source for this valuable oil.

In the last two years a desert plant, the jojoba (pronounced hohoba) has been found to produce seed which is about 50 per cent oil which is nearly identical to Sperm oil. In fact it has fewer contaminants than Sperm oil and has extended uses such as detergent, resin, anti-foaming agent and cosmetic manufacture. The meal left after oil extraction is 30 per cent protein and might, after further processing, be useful as a cattle feed. Because it is an arid region plant it offers the possibility of providing a good cash crop for many countries in Africa and the Middle East. At present several countries, including Australia, are investigating the jojoba.

LOCAL NEWS

A short but very interesting nature trail has been added to the Canberra Botanic Gardens. There are 16 marked points of interest and brochures and information boards make it an instructive stroll.

The Snowy Mountains Engineering Corporation is seeking comments on the possible environmental impact of a proposed dam at Welcome Reef on the Shoalhaven River.

The NPA committee is considering various places in the ACT which it feels should be included in a new Register of the National Estate. Nomination forms for this register were received from the Australian Heritage Commission.



THEMEDA AUSTRALIS (R.Br.) Stapf.

"Kangaroo grass"

This is a tufted perennial
native grass occurring
throughout Australia.

Helen Hewson-Fruend

TRAMPING IN NEW ZEALAND

For the experienced pack-camper, New Zealand offers numerous cross-country walks in its many national parks. Tracks and overnight and shelter huts are well maintained. The Milford Track is pre-eminent, but for this even freedom walkers must book ahead. Entry to the track is by permit. Huts on the best known routes are packed out in mid-summer, and tents are advisable, particularly on the Routeburn and Hollyford tracks.

The less hardy, but competent walker (NPA medium hard) may prefer the guided walks provided by the Tourist Hotel Corporation of New Zealand on the Milford Track and by registered companies which maintain their own lodges on the Routeburn and Hollyford tracks. Various organizations arrange walking and camping tours. A 5-day walk of the Heaphy track was advertised for \$45 return from Christchurch.

There are many day and half-day walks along good trails. Private transport may be needed to the starting point. Routine bus services enable access to the major walks and to other scenic splendours, and there are many day bus and launch tours.

The packaged tours, even those with overnight camping, seem to offer little walking. They lack the freedom of a self-arranged tour. Tour credentials should be checked, particularly those of unregistered tours which require a deposit before information is provided.

Geraldine Spencer

PROJECTED TRIPS - 1977

Plans are in hand for a tour for approximately 12 members to Carnarvon Gorge in Queensland. The trip will be of 16 days and will include a two-day stop-over at the Warrumbungle National Park. Five to six days will be spent in the Carnarvon Gorge National Park area.

The outside estimate of the cost per person will be \$200, which includes vehicle hire, food, camp fees, etc. The dates are to be decided, but will be either 4 June - 19 June or 10-25 September. Confirmation of the actual dates will be made at the NPA meeting on 17 February and subsequent meetings.

Those interested should contact Olive Buckman, 26/4 Lachlan Court, Barton, phone 733017, 8 a.m. - 1 p.m. and 5.30 p.m. - 9 p.m.

Some adventurous members of NPA are planning a trip to Salvator Rosa National Park early in May. The Park, of some 64,000 hectares, is situated north of Roma and some 700 miles from Brisbane, access is by way of Tambo to the west of the Park.

The trip will be conditional upon getting permission from the Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service and being able to acquire a four wheel drive vehicle to ensure that it will be possible to get into the park and out again. Weather can be uncertain - if it rains, it will be difficult, or impossible, to get in, and if it rains whilst we are there, it will be necessary to pack up and move out. It is hoped to do as much as possible in the time available and this may include some pack walking.

Planning to date envisages a departure from Canberra on either Saturday, 7th, or Sunday, 8th May, taking three days to reach Salvator Ros . The first overnight stop might be at Narrabri or Coonamble and the second at Roma, where the party will rendezvous before going on to Salvator Rosa on Tuesday, 10th. It will be necessary to take supplies for at least a week: the return trip being planned to begin on Monday, 16th. Travel will be by cars which will probably have to be left at, or near, Cungelella Station and the last part of the trip made by four wheel drive vehicle.

Anyone wishing to join the party should contact Reg Hook (95-9666) as soon as possible.

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following new members: G.K. Low, the Moss family, J.R. Keating, the Dickins family, the Marshall family and the Horner family.

1976-77 MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

R. Bird, E. Lawrence, J.S. Whitford, J.R. Goodrum, R. Rawson, G. Watt, T. Exley, H. Clark, the Armarego family, the Petterson family, the Andrews family, G. O'Loughlin, the Rigby family, the Rodgers family, the Hyden family, the Macfarlane family, the Mathews family, the Anderson family, J.C. Zajor, A. McLean, H. Carne, the Whittington family, C.G. Baillie, E. Hawkin, M.R. Middleton, M.C. Bouquet, J.C. Banks, the Fenner family, the Hughes family, the Snelgrove family, D.J. Brush, the Richardson family, the Lewis family, M.F. Day, the Rea family, O. Buckman, D.V. Lowe, the Abercrombie family, A.V. Evans, the Paine family, K. Gilmour and the Whittle family.

FLINDERS TOUR 1976

The idea of a two-weeks' tour of National Parks for members of NPA of the ACT had been with me for nearly four years. It became a real possibility when a Canberra firm put 'drive yourself' coaches on the market. Having received the OK from the committee, plans soon crystallized to a 16-day trip which would give us 9-10 days in the Flinders Ranges and 6-7 days travelling.

Originally it was planned to have a party of 15. The space available in the coach was limited however, and a total of 12 people with one extra vehicle was finally decided upon.

By mid-June the first meeting was held and maps, leaflets etc. were handed out. An outline of routes, times and walks etc. was discussed. A small catering committee spent an evening listing the basic items needed and detailing the food required to ensure that a minimum needed to be bought en route.

A second meeting was held in mid-August and the plans were discussed in more detail. Various members volunteered to tackle specific jobs such as driving, unloading, maintenance, etc. The extra vehicle was also arranged at this meeting.

The third meeting of the group was also well worthwhile, when we were lent the coach for a day. Personal and communal equipment was assembled and in a lay-by off the Cooma Road, we practised loading and unloading and tent erecting. The drivers got the feel of the vehicle and we tried out the seating space in the coach.

In the last week's preparation, the thousand and one details grew into time consuming proportions. Working out quantities, ordering, receiving, checking, listing, packing in order of need, labelling, etc. took many hours but was time well spent.

At last - D-day minus one - the night before departure, when all members gathered to help load the coach, roof rack, etc. At this point we had to revise our plan of 10 in the coach and 2 in the car to 8 in the coach and 4 in the car. Eventually, however, all was ready, and the next morning we were on our way.

to be concluded.

Olive B.

NPA OUTINGS

MARCH

5th-6th, Saturday-Sunday

Dingo Flats

Ref: Canberra 1:250,000

A camping week-end with walks in the area and a "John Schunke's barbecue" on Saturday night!

Meet at Uriarra homestead at 10 a.m.

All those intending to go, please contact the Leader.

Leader: Pat Michell 473264 (home)

12th-14th, Saturday-Monday

Little Peppercorn Plain

Ref: Tantangara 1:100,000

Camping by a creek on Little Peppercorn Plain with walks in the area (Peppercorn Hill and Mt Jackson).

Meeting at Yarrangobilly Caves Visitors' Centre on Saturday at 11.30 a.m. for a picnic lunch and a visit to the caves and thermal pool before setting up camp at Little Peppercorn Plain.

For those wishing to do the pack walk, meet on Friday night at the hut on Little Peppercorn Plain (where the powerline cuts the Brindabella - Rules Point Road).

All members (both campers and pack walkers) are requested to contact the

Leaders: Joan Goodrum 816090

Jan Kiek 862140

13th, Sunday

A walk for those NPA enthusiasts left in Canberra! Please contact Hela Lindeman for information 964926 (home)

20th Sunday

Mt Orroral

Ref: Bimberi 1:50,000

This is a steep walk, not suitable for young children - ideal for those who want to stretch their legs!

Meet at the picnic area on the road to Orroral Tracking Station (just over the Orroral River Crossing) at 9.30 a.m.

Leader: John Holtzapffel 915817 (home)

26th-27th, Saturday-Sunday

Dubbo Hill

Ref: Brindabella 1:100,000

A must for all blackberrying enthusiasts! Plus walks in the area.

Please contact the leader if you intend to go on this camp.

Meet at Brindabella at 10.30 a.m.

Leader: Lyn Richardson 412425 (home)

NPA OUTINGS

APRIL

3rd, Sunday

Ref: Tantangara 1:100,000

Billy Billy Rocks

Although Billy Billy Rocks is only about 3 km from the Corin Dam road, dense scrub and steep terrain combine to make it a moderately difficult day walk. An easy walk will be arranged in this area, should sufficient members request it. Meet at Smokers' Gap on Corin Dam road at 9.30 a.m. Parking area is on the northern side of the road 200 m on the Canberra side of Smokers' Gap sign. Leader: Peter Judge 496396

Easter - 8th-11th, Friday-Monday

Camp: Mallacoota Inlet

Ref: Mallacoota 1:250,000

This is an area of sandy beaches interspersed with rocky headlands, set against a backdrop of open forests and distant ranges. There are a number of graded tracks within the Mallacoota Inlet National Park.

Meet at Mallacoota at the foreshore camping area at mid-day on Friday.

Leader: To be nominated.

All those intending to camp please contact Jan Kiek 862140

OR: Nadgee to Mallacoota

Pack Walk - 8th-11th, Friday-Monday

The track follows along the coast (easy walking but long). Numbers for this walk are severely limited (15).

Meet at Nadgee Reserve on 11 Friday at 11 a.m.

Leader: Bill Watson 816601

OR: Walk, 9th, Saturday

Those members who are staying at home for Easter, a walk will be arranged.

Please contact Hela Lindemann 864925

17th, Sunday

Queanbeyan - Jumping Valley Creek

This is an easy walk along a track on the northern side of the Queanbeyan River foothills, which goes through an old farming area and past a disused mine.

Meet at Atkinson Road, Queanbeyan - at the top end behind the golf course at 2 p.m.

Leader: Reg Alder 542240

23rd-25th, Saturday-Monday

Little Forest Plateau

Ref: Ulladulla 1:250,000

We hope that this time the weather will be more favourable and allow us to join the Milton Branch and explore Little Forest Plateau. This outing is subject to confirmation. Meet at Ulladulla Park (bottom of the hill, on the right) at 9.30 a.m. SHARP. Allow 3½-4 hours' travelling time.

All campers please contact the leader - Fiona Brand 479538

NPA OUTINGS

MAY

30th April-1st May, Saturday-Sunday

Mt Gudgenby: Pack Walk

Ref: Canberra 1:250,000

Meet at Forestry hut on Friday night.

Leader: Neville Esau 864176

OR Gudgenby: Walk, 1st, Sunday

A day walk in the proposed Gudgenby National Park.

Meet at Gudgenby Bridge (beyond Glendale Crossing) on the Tharwa-Shannon's Flat Road at 9.30 a.m.

Leader: Julie Henry 485130

8th, Sunday

Mt Ainslie - Mt Majura

Ref: Canberra 1:250,000

A pleasant walk encompassing two local mountains.

Meet at the Ainslie Hostel at 2 p.m.

Leader: Olive Buckman 733017

15th, Sunday

Nursery Swamp

Ref: Canberra 1:250,000

It is planned to do the full traverse of Nursery Swamp. This is a medium grade walk mainly across button grass, with some scrub bashing at the end. Meet at the picnic area on the road to Orroral Tracking Station (just near Orroral River crossing) at 9.30 a.m.

Leader: Reg Alder 542240

22nd, Sunday

Mt Hartwood

A day walk along a medium grade track with views over the Wee Jasper area. Meet at the junction of Sawyer's Creek road and the Yass-Wee Jasper road, at 10 a.m. (Allow 1½ hours' travelling time.)

Leader: Lyn Richardson 412425

29th, Sunday

Mt Tinderry

Ref: Canberra 1:250,000

A hard long walk with some beautiful views (weather permitting).

Meet at Michaelago at 9 a.m. SHARP

Leader: John Holtzapffel 815817

NPA OUTINGS

JUNE

5th, Sunday
Murrumbidgee Gorge

Ref: Canberra 1:250,000

An easy walk to view the gorge.
Meet at Michaelago at 10.30 a.m.
Leader: Laurie Adams 473761

11th-13th, Saturday-Monday
Warrumbungle National Park - Coonabarabran

An area of spectacular scenery resulting from erosion of ancient volcanoes, the solidified lava resisting erosion to form towering spires and walls. A bus will be hired for this trip (14 seater). All members interested should contact the leader as early as possible.
Leader: Neville Esau 864176

12th, Sunday

Those members wishing to go on a day outing in the Canberra area, please contact Hela Lindemann 864926

19th, Sunday
Honeysuckle Creek area

Ref: Canberra 1:250,000

A medium grade walk along a ridge (no track) to view some rock tors.
Meet at Honeysuckle Creek Tracking Station car park at 9.30 a.m.
Leader: Charles Hill 958924

25th-26th, Saturday-Sunday
Araluen

Ref: Araluen 1:50,000

THE LOST WEEKEND!

A must for all those who enjoy Araluen (i.e. the pub and district). Limited accommodation at the pub (22) - dinner, bed and breakfast and packed lunch (for Sunday) \$10.90 each. Camping also available. Talks and walks in and about the area.
Meet at the Araluen Pub at midday.
Leader: Darryl Hawke 883763

MEMBERS REQUESTING FURTHER INFORMATION ETC. ABOUT OUTINGS SHOULD CONTACT THE LEADER OF THE OUTING OR JAN KIEK, telephone 862140

GENERAL MEETINGS

at 8.00 p.m. in Room 1, Griffin Centre,
Bunda Street, Civic.

MARCH, 17th:

DR ROGER BARTELL of CSIRO will speak on -
"Reptiles"

APRIL, 21st:

DR G.F. VAN TETS OF CSIRO will speak on -
"Fossil Birds of Australia"

MAY, 19th:

A Film Evening - nature and outdoor films.

National Parks Association outings summary

MARCH

5 Saturday -	Dingo Flats	Camp
6 Sunday		
12 Saturday-	Little Peppercorn Plain	Camp OR
14 Monday	Cave Creek	Pack Walk OR
13 Sunday	Local area	Walk
20 Sunday	Mt Orroral	Walk
26 Saturday -		
27 Sunday	Dubbo Hill	Camp

APRIL

3 Sunday	Billy Billy Rocks	Walk
8 Friday -	Mallacoota	Camp OR
11 Monday	Nadgee	Pack Walk OR
9 Saturday	Canberra area	Walk
17 Sunday	Jumping Valley Creek	Walk
23 Saturday -		
25 Monday	Little Forest Plateau	Camp

MAY

30 April Saturday -		
1 May Sunday	Mt Gudgenby	Pack Walk OR
1 Sunday	Gudgenby area	Walk
8 Sunday	Mt Ainslie - Mt Majura	Walk
15 Sunday	Nursery Swamp	Walk
22 Sunday	Mt Hartwood	Walk
29 Sunday	Mt Tinderry	Walk

JUNE

5 Sunday	Murrumbidgee Gorge	Walk
11 Saturday -	Warrumbungle National	Camp/
13 Monday	Park	Pack Walk
12 Sunday	Canberra area	Walk
19 Sunday	Honeysuckle Creek	Walk
25 Saturday -		
26 Sunday	Araluen	Pub week-end