



NPA Bulletin



- Climbing Mount Ainslie with ACT Government ministers
- Plan to enlarge Warragamba Dam threatens world heritage area
- Charles Sturt's blazed tree on the Murrumbidgee
- Panoramic views of southern Namadgi National Park

conservation education protection

March 2022 – Volume 59 – Number 1

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conservation education protection

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The **NPA Bulletin** provides the association's members with news on activities and developments in environmental and heritage conservation, education and protection, particularly as bearing on the Australian Capital Territory and adjacent regions. The *Bulletin*, our association's signature publication and prime source of information about NPA ACT, is published quarterly, in print and online, compliant with the NPA's aims and objectives. The *NPA Bulletin*:

- keeps readers informed of NPA Committee and Subcommittee deliberations and decisions, and NPA events such as social gatherings, outings, work parties and research projects,
- provides a forum for members and invited guests to express views on matters of interest and concern to NPA ACT,
- fulfils an educational role on conservation and outdoor recreation issues, and
- accepts paid advertising, where appropriate.

The editor of the *Bulletin* is bound to observe the foregoing.

Contributions of articles (up to 1,000 words), letters, poems, drawings and photos are welcome. Longer articles will be considered. Photos should be free of embedded information such as dates and names.

All items accepted for publication may be subject to editing. In making contributions, authors acknowledge that the editor retains the right of final decision on content and presentation. The *Bulletin* is also published on the NPA website where items may include extra text or photos.

Disclaimer:

Articles by contributors may not necessarily reflect association opinion or objectives

Contributions and advertisements

Send all items to the Bulletin Team, email admin@npaact.org.au.

Contact the NPA office for information and rates for advertisements.

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This issue was prepared by

Editor: Brian Slee

Copyeditor: Ed Highley

Design: Sabine Friedrich

NPA ACT office

Unit 14 Lena Karmel Lodge, 26 Barry Drive, Acton, co-located with the Conservation Council. It is staffed by volunteers on an irregular basis. Messages may be left at any time.

Phone: (02) 6229 3201 or 0429 356 212 (if urgent).

Email: admin@npaact.org.au

Postal address: GPO Box 544, Canberra, ACT 2601

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Cover photos

Front cover: *Azure Kingfisher, Bega River Anabranche, NSW*. By Matthew Higgins

Back (top): *Mike Bremers on new Snowy River track, December 2021*. By Brian Slee

Back (bottom): *Spencer Creek bridge*. By Mike Bremers

From the President

It was a pleasure to bid farewell to 2021, but not until after the traditional NPA Christmas Party, held on 12 December at Namadgi Visitor Centre. The weather was perfect and attendance was over 45 members and guests, including several new members. Thanks to Allan and Cynthia for organising the overall set-up, to Kevin for providing the sausage sizzle and to everyone who brought something to share.

Another NPA tradition since 2009 is Art Week at Gudgenby Cottage, usually occurring twice a year, most recently from 4 to 12 December, and organised by Adrienne Nicholson and Hazel Rath. In exchange for use of the cottage, we stage an exhibition in Namadgi Visitor Centre, the current display running through to 6 April. The art (photography, painting, basketry) was prepared and presented by Adrienne, Hazel, Eleanor Cotterell and Maria Boreham. Thank you to everyone. Watch the website for the announcement of the next Art Week.



Esther Gallant, Brett McNamara. Photo by Max Lawrence Alan Laird. Photo by Brian Slee

NPA Christmas Party 2021. Photo by Max Lawrence



Good news on feral horses with NSW finally releasing a plan to reduce horse numbers in Kosciuszko National Park. Some minor alterations to specifics of the plan were made as the result of the thousands of submissions. Thanks to everyone who made a submission or signed the Reclaim Kosci petition.

Do consider walking with us. Our outings program is running again with the usual bushwalks (email outings@npaact.org.au to be added to the short notification walks list). We are also scheduling nature and cultural walks. A recent walk, led by Rainer Rehwinkel and Peta Bulling and organised by Isobel Crawford, was jointly sponsored with the ACT Conservation Council and emphasised the importance of the preservation of Blewitts Block in Molonglo, an example of an endangered grassy woodland ecosystem.

We are planning our meeting formats as the COVID-19 situation evolves (see inside back cover of *Bulletin*). On behalf of the committee, best wishes for a safe 2022.

Esther Gallant

Christmas with Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group

In conjunction with our 11 December work party, 15 Gudgenby Bushies celebrated Christmas with NPA Art Week participants at Gudgenby Cottage, which was heated by a wood fire on an extraordinarily cold day. Via an event organised by Jeff Eichler of the Southern ACT Catchment Group, we were joined by several members of the public interested in learning about the revegetation project. As well as the usual convivial atmosphere and generous helpings of delicious home-made goodies, the day was a great opportunity to demonstrate our efforts to the wider public. We are hopeful that there will be more such events.

Our 2021 work program was again disrupted by COVID-19 and wet weather. We could hold only eight work parties, with three cancelled and one delayed. Nevertheless, we were able to continue making inroads into woody weeds at a number of more accessible sites. A highlight was

control of exotic False Acacia surrounding the sheep dip at Frank and Jacks Hut (*NPA Bulletin* June 2021) and this will likely be an ongoing activity. The removal of the fire-damaged Olympic Landcare enclosure at Yankee Hat carpark has given a lift to the entrance to the reveg area (*NPA Bulletin* September 2021).

The continuing wet weather has been a boon with generally very good tree recovery and (so far at least) limited regrowth of woody weeds. And, encouragingly, no pine wildings have been recorded since work parties resumed after the 2020 Orroral fire.

Thanks, as always, go to Secretary Hazel Rath, Treasurer Chesley Engram, Public Officer Martin Chalk and other members of the committee for their efforts during the year. We hope that 2022 will be kinder and that a full program of work parties will be possible for the first time in 3 years.

Doug Brown,
GBRG President

New member Victoria.

Doug, Steve, Jenny, Hugh, Brian. Photos by Kevin McCue



The loss of another environmental warrior – Geoff Hope

A recurring theme from the many alpine ecologists and scientists when they learned of Emeritus Professor Geoff Hope's death on 26 December 2021 was one of 'hope', particularly with respect to the recovery of bogs and mires after major fire events across Namadgi and Kosciuszko national parks.

As a member of the Interim Namadgi Advisory Board in the immediacy after the 2003 fires, I remember being shown photos and given commentary by Geoff Hope and others, by the river, in Cotter Valley. Geoff picked up the depleted riverbank soil, cradled it in the palm of his hand and poured water onto it. The water ran around like blobs of mercury, Geoff saying 'This was a 400 year landscape-changing event.' I had never heard or seen anything like it before, and his profound words have stayed with me.

Other acknowledgements from former NPWS managers and fellow scientists told of similar guidance and expertise. For example, Dave Darlington:

Geoff was a wonderful source of knowledge and inspiration following the 2003 bushfires which impacted most of the higher altitude bogs. His combined knowledge with that of Graeme Worboys, Roger Good and Jenny Winham gave us all a sense of hope that the bogs would recover with some help. As the Regional Manager at that time I really appreciated that sense of hope that Geoff so professionally taught us to understand and appreciate.

Geoff imparted the same optimism for recovery to me and others following the 2019–20 fires.

Others will detail Geoff's extraordinary academic work, knowledge and publications on bogs and mires. Like many NPA members, it was only in more recent years, with the increase in feral horse populations and the threats especially to the Kosciuszko vast wetland areas, and our own Cotter Catchment and Namadgi, that we realised what a powerful but subtle voice we had amongst us. Geoff was also a major speaker at the NPA Symposia and at the 2018 Academy of Science's Kosciuszko Science Conference on Feral Horse Impacts.

In recent years we owe much to Geoff as he fought tirelessly to protect our mountain catchments. Despite his ill-health and ongoing medical treatment he responded to the many calls to take VIPs and influencers with the Reclaim Kosci team to Long Plain to explain the damage that feral horses were making to our precious wetlands.

He was also the key scientist on the two NPA ACT field trips: to Namadgi in 2018 and Tantangara in 2019. The importance of Geoff providing knowledge and gaining the support of ACT MLAs (minister, shadow minister, other MLAs and a suite of staffers), departmental managers, Icon Water, ACT Commissioner for the Environment, and NSW and ACT Parks staff, should never be underestimated. His willingness to assist, mostly at short notice, and to travel long distances, often in appalling weather, was done without promoting either his own importance, or of just how much we had grown to depend upon him.



Geoff Hope, Roger Good, NPA Symposium 2008. Photo by Max Lawrence

In these later years I experienced Geoff's quirky sense of humour. Others commented on his wit, his wry comments and the funny times and pranks they shared with him even going back to undergraduate university days.

His latest legacy is the powerful and sustained efforts he put into the Kosciuszko Scientific Advisory Committee (a committee weighted and chaired by pro-horse advocates) to hold ground to deliver the 2021 Kosciuszko Wild Horse Plan. While we would have wished for a stronger feral horse removal program, we must fully acknowledge that it would have been far weaker without Geoff's carriage during those critical two years of development.

We and our precious bogs and wetlands have lost a great advocate, scientist and warrior. Vale Geoff and thank you for your lifetime's work. See memorial pack walk, 27-29 April, in Outings program.

Di Thompson

Geoff Hope describing sphagnum at Spicers Creek, Tantangara area, 2019. Photo by Di Thompson



NPA Art Week at Gudgenby Cottage



Below: Roaring Gudgenby River

The usual September/October Art Week (for 2021) was postponed due to a film crew (again) occupying the cottage so we went 4–12 December, which some may recall was somewhat WET. The footbridge across the Gudgenby River is usually half a metre above the water but see the photo. While we did venture out, more time than usual was spent in the cottage, with a roaring fire – remember, this was December!

The usual exhibition at Namadgi Visitor Centre was consequently delayed and went up in January. It will remain until 6 April.

Adrienne Nicholson



Above: Hazel Rath, Eleanor Cotterell installing exhibition

Below: Footbridge to Homestead. Photos by Adrienne Nicholson



From the Environment Subcommittee

NPA submission on Warragamba Dam enlargement

The proposal to raise the height of the wall of Warragamba Dam brings the threat of catastrophic damage to the natural environment above the dam. Moreover, and equally perversely, its implementation will not solve the problem it purports to address; namely the intermittent flooding of areas of western Sydney below the dam, since almost half of all floodwaters affecting the Penrith region come from outside the dam's catchment.

The proposal, if implemented, will affect areas designated as being of Outstanding Universal Value in UNESCO's World Heritage list, as well as areas protected under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NPW Act). Of particular concern is the effect on Kowmung River, listed under the NPW Act as a 'wild river' emblematic of the natural environment.

It is estimated that 65 kilometres of wilderness rivers and 5,700 hectares of national parks will be damaged by raising the dam wall, affecting threatened ecosystems such as Box Gum Grassy Woodland and species such as the Regent Honeyeater. There were insufficient field surveys to fully explore these effects in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the project.

The proposed destruction of land within the World Heritage area is a clear breach of Australia's obligations under the World Heritage Convention and has the potential for the area to be removed from that listing, leading to a reduction in tourism, at significant economic cost.

In light of these issues, the NPA ACT, in its recent submission on the project's EIS, called upon the NSW Government to reject the proposal and implement alternative flood-mitigation measures, and ban any further development in areas of high flood risk.

The NPA ACT has also recently commented on the ACT Government's Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate's review of the 1998 Murrumbidgee River Corridor (MRC) Management Plan. It is almost 24 years since the plan was last revised and it requires significant updates. The NPA ACT noted that the review is only the first

stage in achieving a new plan for the MRC and there is a need for resources to be allocated to ensure the review's outcomes lead to a timely and comprehensive revision.

The plan's objectives cover not only public lands in the MRC but also all other relevant land tenures, and rural leases in particular. The interplay of all land tenures on the plan's objectives has become even more relevant as large sections of the MRC are part of the Western Edge Investigation (WEI), which seeks to identify greenfield areas suitable for future urban development. Outcomes of the WEI have the potential to disrupt existing conservation corridors to the detriment of the values of the MRC. The NPA ACT believes that it is vital that the review ensures that the revised plan acknowledges and takes account of the connectivity of the MRC's natural values across the broader landscape.

Copies of both aforementioned submissions are available on the NPA website. If you are concerned about the environment, the NPA's Environment Subcommittee meets regularly to address issues facing local reserves and biodiversity in general. Please contact me on 0410 875 731 for more information.

Rod Griffiths
Convener, Environment Subcommittee



Goanna project update

Because of COVID-19 and La Niña, 2021 proved to be the hardest year so far of the Rosenberg's Monitor citizen science project. Nevertheless, so far this season (as at 1 February), 924 hours have been volunteered by 31 individuals, a fantastic contribution in spite of rainy weather, COVID-19 restrictions, and cancellations and difficulties due to flooding, including cancellation of the 2021 student camp.

Hatchling patrols

Hatchling patrols were successful because they are mainly near the Namadji National Park entrance. Fortnightly monitoring was tried this year, rather than weekly. It worked, and we found goannas used a new set of termite mounds, rather than repeating use of the 18 mounds recorded last year.

Movement data from female goannas

The highest priority this year was to obtain movement data from female goannas across the full active season. Over the years, every step in the process has provided unexpected challenges. First we must trap female goannas (took 3 years to learn how); then attach GPS packs so they stay on; then monitor the females closely enough to spot packs about to be shed, in time to re-glue them; and fourth, we need to recapture all females in December-January to exchange exhausted GPS packs with new ones. The fourth was a new requirement this year, to obtain more GPS data per day. It sounds simple but involved many failed attempts.

January 22 proved to be a dramatic and very positive day. We obtained vehicle access through the first four fords on the Naas River road and walked from there past the next three fords, to reach the two least-accessible female goannas. I expected both GPS packs would have been shed but we were lucky. We dug both females from rocky burrows well up the side of Clear Range, and replaced their now-exhausted GPS backpacks with fresh ones. Unfortunately, I had carried only enough glue for

John Brickhill crossing Naas River to M7, carrying the radio tracking antenna. Photos by Don Fletcher



Left arrow locates the M7 burrow, across Naas River and high up Clear Range – higher than a previous M7 capture location indicated by the right arrow

one goanna, so our trip had to be repeated the next day to return the second goanna, M7. What an epic! We were tired.

The more accessible female, K4, which lives at the second ford, has given us repeated downloads of data. Importantly, there is no sign of migratory movement. It will also be important to record if any movements take place at egg-laying time.

Eventually the final GPS pack was replaced. We hope for a lot of good data from these goannas through February and March.

John Brickhill starting steep climb to M7



Rare juvenile

During spring, Jason Dobry, PhD candidate researching goanna genetics at University of Canberra, visited the goanna nests found on our hatchling patrols, seeking photos of the beautiful creatures that emerge. He got no photos but Jason's every visit produced herpetological gold.

First, by diligently looking in every potential reptile burrow he passed, Jason produced the juvenile Rosenberg's Goanna seen in the photos. It weighed 180 g. This is the first Rosenberg's Goanna of this size class that has ever been seen in our Naas Valley project. We have seen scores of hatchlings, probably weighing around 15 g, and 112 adults or sub-adults from 560 g upward, but nothing between those size classes until Jason caught this attractive looking individual. It has the camouflaged colour of an adult and the slender proportions, and placid demeanour, of a hatchling.



Left: Jason Dobry with the 180 g juvenile Rosenberg's Goanna.

Left below: Closer view of the juvenile Rosenberg's Goanna. Both photos by Don Fletcher



Below: Blackish Blind Snake. Photo by Jason Dobry

Curtin's new goanna art

In December 2021, the installation of new playing field watering systems was completed at North Curtin oval. A large plain black box containing the valves and meters sat next to Dunstan Street. Shortly before Christmas it was suddenly transformed with art work. Two different murals were applied by vinyl transfer to all four sides of the box. No artist appears to have been given credit.

While the art is Aboriginal in style, the colour blue is not traditional and the goannas have perhaps more 'attitude' than might ordinarily be found in nature. Whatever, it is an eye-catching addition to the suburban streetscape.

Installations in Curtin.
Photos by Brian Slee

Brian Slee



Barbara Joyce Comfort - a reminiscence

(11 May 1923 - 9 December 2021)

Syd and Barbara's wedding 1952 (Photo from 60th anniversary invitation)

John and I met Barbara and Syd Comfort many years ago on NPA car camps. There were always some, like us, in tents but quite a few would arrive with campervans, including the Comforts. Over the years Barbara and Syd would invite us to luncheons or afternoon teas at their home in Mawson, with its wonderful garden. Barbara always prepared delicious food, beautifully presented, and the selection of other guests made for very happy occasions. Barbara was a most gracious hostess. She and Syd loved to travel and did so despite Barbara having severe physical mobility problems. She was always cheerful and determined. We enjoyed a sailing holiday with them on Myall Lakes. We even bumped into them at the Lava Tubes in Far North Queensland when they were touring independently.



Among Barbara's hobbies was collecting Canberra-themed souvenir chinaware, some of it dating back to the very early Canberra days. From time to time she would make this collection available for public inspection. With five children and a large extended family, Barbara's life was lived to the full.

Judith Webster

Editor: Condolences to Life Member, Syd Comfort, and family from the NPA on the passing of Barbara.

Memories of meeting Dr Edward Lloyd Fleming

(20 January 1925 - 27 November 2021)

I was researching the life of Charlie Carter, a hermit, healer and high country legend, when I heard of a man living in Canberra who had met Charlie many years ago. I thought he must be as old as Methuselah because Charlie died in 1952. It turned out the mystery man was Ted Fleming, a friend of NPA member Syd Comfort, who told me Ted lived in Deakin so off I drove to have a chat.



Ted Fleming, Max Lawrence, Badja Fire Trail, NSW, 1998

The chat unveiled a big bushwalk Ted and friends did from Benambra to Kosciuszko in January 1952, as well as a large collection of photos and a bound volume of all Ted's bushwalking escapades in Australia and overseas. There were very many, some with NPA ACT – enough to fill 340 densely typed pages. In my work there is nothing quite like coming across first person entries in a diary, especially if they have a deeper poetic quality. Here are evocative extracts about an evening at Tin Mines Hut:

A bright but cloud-veiled moon and no breeze. A silent, wide valley, and a rather smoky campfire. [...] I sit on my log with my candle flickering and spluttering. Charlie's valley is so peaceful, so utterly remote. Just think – tonight we are in one of the most inaccessible parts of the south east of Australia.

Clank, clank goes the horse bell. The night is almost eerie in its quietness and the hill, way down over the snow plain, is quite clear in the moonlight. The old fork stick I used for the fire is shadowed huge on the tin chimney of the hut. If only one could paint all this, or relive it at will, say each quarter of the year.

Klaus Hueneke

Editor: Ted joined NPA in 1997 and supported it for the rest of his life. Many members share memories of bushwalks with him. For more about Ted, some photos and a detailed account of his fascinating meeting with Carter, see pp. 81–86 of *Charlie Carter* by Klaus Hueneke, Tabletop Press, 2017.

NPA work party summary – July to December 2021

Month	Activity	Agency	Participants
July	Cancelled due to weather.		
August	Cancelled due to pandemic lockdown.		
September	Cancelled due to pandemic lockdown.		
October	Glendale fences: 450 m removed. All of the originally surveyed 1,340 m now removed. An additional 425 m located in a survey conducted on this work party.	PCS	8
November	Red Gum block, Spring Station Creek: African Love Grass treated along the western fence and in the south-eastern corner of the block. Throughout the block, participants cut-and-dabbed blackberry and removed verbascum, thistle and St Johns Wort by hand.	PCS	4
December	No work party.		



Isobel, Don, Rebecca, Rosemary, Shane, Esther, John walked up Mount Ainslie. Photos by Sabine Friedrich

A very ministerial walk

On Saturday 5 February, five NPA members walked up Mount Ainslie with ACT Legislative Assembly ministers Shane Rattenbury and Rebecca Vassarotti, to be met at the summit by Helen Oakey, executive director of the Conservation Council ACT – with breakfast. This was the result of my winning personal bid in the December 2021 Conservation Council auction for 'A very ministerial walk'. I was accompanied by Rosemary Hollow, Don Fletcher, John Brickhill and Isobel Crawford. Two other NPA members, Chris Emery and, with her camera, Sabine Friedrich, joined us at the top. And, of course, we did some serious lobbying during the over 2 hours of the event.

Esther Gallant



*Above: Esther, Shane, Don
Below: Isobel sharing the goodies with Chris and Shane*



*Above: John, Rebecca
Below: Helen in demonstrative discussion with Rebecca*

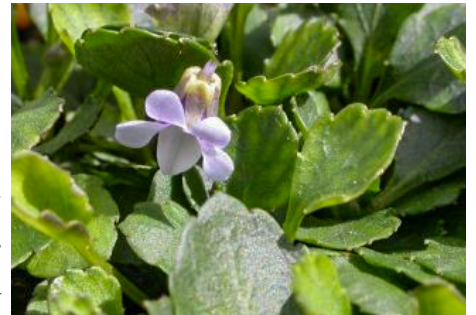


Bushwalking for science – assisting the ‘Survive and Thrive’ project

The National Parks Conservation Trust, ACT Conservation Research, World Wide Fund for Nature Australia, Australian Alps National Parks Cooperative Management Program and the Australian National Botanic Gardens are collaborating on the ‘Survive and Thrive’ project, informatively subtitled ‘Fire recovery and climate change resilience for threatened plant species in sub-alpine south-eastern Australia’.

The project’s goal is to conserve in botanic gardens the subalpine plant species that have been severely affected by the recent fires in three national parks; Namadgi, Kosciuszko and Alpine. Five species are being targeted initially:

- Slender Parrot-pea (*Almaleea capitata*)
- Shiny Phebalium (*Leionema lamprophyllum* subsp. *obovatum*)
- Namadgi Tea Tree (*Leptospermum namadgiense*)
- A daisy bush (*Olearia* sp. *Rhizomatica*)
- Dwarf Violet (*Viola improcera*)



This ‘ex-situ conservation’ (i.e. away from where the plants grow naturally) involves collecting seed and/or cuttings in the wild, developing propagation methods, and growing the plants in botanic gardens as insurance against extinction in the wild.

NPA ACT has been asked to help look for these species, as our members spend time in areas of suitable habitat. Some of our outings over the next year or so will concentrate on searching for new populations of these species: two such outings (described below) were held on 27–29 December 2021 and 3–5 January 2022.

Leaders of other walks in subalpine areas are welcome to discuss which species they should keep an eye out for.

Right – from top:
Shiny Phebalium
Namadgi Tea-tree
Olearia sp. *Rhizomatica*
Dwarf Violet

Left: Slender
Parrot-pea flowers

Searching for Slender Parrot-pea – Naas Creek

Date: 27–29 December 2021

Participants: Isobel Crawford (leader), John Brickhill, Meg McKone

Weather: Frost on tents night one; pleasingly warm days.

There are only three collections of Slender Parrot-pea from the ACT in the Australian National Herbarium, from the headwaters of Bluegum Creek and a tributary of upper Rendezvous Creek.



Slender Parrot-pea in fruit

VicFlora describes it as a slender, trailing shrub with branches to 1 m long confined to subalpine damp to wet heathlands. It occurs south from Namadgi National Park to Kosciuszko and eastern Victoria, from 1,240–1,500 m elevation, usually on granite.

We camped south of the intersection of Sams Creek Fire Trail and Old Boboyan Road, in the shelter of regenerating Black Sallees (*Eucalyptus stellulata*). The first

Meg shaded by the, still living, border marker tree, Maurice Luton fire trail.
Photo by Isobel Crawford



afternoon we surveyed Naas Creek up to 1,180 m, and its north-flowing tributaries. We met one Highland Copperhead (*Austrelaps ramsayi*). We found no suitable habitat for Slender Parrot-pea.

Next day we walked up Sams Creek and Maurice Luton Fire trails to the NSW border, and down to Sams Creek in Scabby Range Nature Reserve. Nowhere did we find suitable habitat for the Slender Parrot-pea or any of the other fire-affected species. But we did find a profusion of post-fire plant growth, especially of herbaceous species revelling in the extra light, nutrients and atypically high rainfall over the past 2 years. We saw three more Highland Copperheads on day 2, and one Blotched Blue-tongue Lizard (*Tiliqua nigrolutea*) and many insects, and recorded some in Canberra Nature Map. We also had good views of a Southern Boobook (*Ninox novaeseelandiae*). We heard many Rufous Whistlers (*Pachycephala rufiventris*) in forest areas and Stubble Quails (*Coturnix pectoralis*) in the grasslands. The full list is available on ebird (<https://ebird.org/home>).

A short-lived fogbow appeared in the mist on the last morning as we were finishing breakfast. Fifteen grasses, rushes and sedges were collected for the Australian National Herbarium.



Copperhead. Photo by Isobel Crawford

Upper Cotter plant survey – above Cotter Flats

Date: 3–5 January 2022

Participants: Isobel Crawford (leader), John Brickhill, Esther Gallant, Sonja Lenz, Kevin McCue, Deidre Shaw

Weather: Heavy rain and a little hail on the way in. Warmish with a little rain for the next 2 days.

We camped at Cotter Hut and searched part of Rolleys Flats to the south for Dwarf Violet and Slender Parrot-pea. Suitable habitat was recorded but no plants were found. By contrast, many common species were flowering profusely in response to increased light and high rainfall. The flats appear to be being invaded by young eucalypts, as was also apparent at Naas Creek, so that what was previously grassland/sedgeland or low shrubland will become eucalypt-dominated in future, and therefore more prone to burning and possibly less able to store water.

We also weeded around Cotter Hut and removed or cut-and-dabbed 11 broom plants, 160 Great Mullein, 100 Spear Thistles, 6 Sweet Briars and 50 parsnips. We also recorded and removed African Lovegrass from the track at Bimberi Creek and just south of the hut. Eighteen grasses, rushes and sedges were collected for the Australian National Herbarium, and living material of most for the Australian National Botanic Gardens. Running repairs included reattaching a stay on the weather station and reconnecting the inflow pipe to the water tank at the hut.

Thanks to ranger Lizabeth Collier for permission to drive into and use Cotter Hut. This was most appreciated, especially on the first, very rainy night.

Isobel Crawford



Coronet Peak. Photo by Kevin McCue

National Koala Disease Risk Analysis project

The Koala Health Hub at the University of Sydney is undertaking a national koala disease risk analysis. The project is supported by the Australian Government's *Bushfire Recovery for Wildlife and their Habitats* program with a finalisation date of 30 June 2022.

Simone Vitali, School of Veterinary Science, University of Sydney, simone.vitali@sydney.edu.au, is leading the National Koala Disease Risk Analysis (KDRA) project team, supported by Andrea Reiss from Wildlife Health Australia and IUCN Wildlife DRA facilitator Richard Jakob-Hoff. Associate Professor Damien Higgins, as Koala Health Hub lead, provides project oversight.

Disease is a significant threat to koala health and welfare. The KDRA aims to develop a common understanding of this threat, in the context of all threats facing this iconic species, and to encourage a nationally coordinated and collaborative approach to disease prevention and control.

Progress of the KDRA can be followed through the project's Google site <https://sites.google.com/view/koaladra/home?authuser=0> which will be updated regularly.

The KDRA is being developed through close consultation with a Workshop Stakeholder Group of approximately 40 experts and stakeholders with interest or expertise in koala health and conservation, including government officers, researchers, veterinarians, rehabilitators, land use managers, Indigenous representatives and conservation officers. This group is participating in a series of online workshops to lend their perspectives to the KDRA development. A subset of stakeholders form an expert advisory group who are assisting more closely in the design, development, progress and review of the KDRA. Details of members of each group are available at the Google site.

You are invited to contact the project lead, or members of the workshop stakeholder group, with any feedback. Input in the form of questions, comments or information which may be relevant to the KDRA development is encouraged.

Emailed announcement by project leader, 12 January 2022



Three weeks on the Murrumbidgee

Lower Lachlan. All photos by Mike Bremers

In November 2021 I paddled a kayak 690 km down the Murrumbidgee River. The journey was in two parts. The first was a 14 day solo 510 km from Wagga Wagga to Hay, and the second, with four friends, was 180 km from Maude to Balranald which was completed in 6 days.

Wagga Wagga to Hay

The Wagga Wagga to Hay section was enjoyable but largely uneventful. The river level was high which meant that the sandy beaches were underwater and camping each night was generally amongst green grass on river banks. On approach to Hay, I rested on a rainy day and there were several days where I did not travel far due to strong winds. By far the highlight was a massive ring tree with several nearby scar trees downstream of Carrathool.

Maude to Balranald

In contrast, the Maude to Balranald section was rather eventful. As the river was full, water was flowing into the Great Cumbungi and Lowbidgee swamps on either

side of the river. These swamps are composed of reed beds, lignum wetland and extensive River Red Gum woodland areas, some of the largest in the Murray–Darling Basin. They act as sponges in tempering the effect of floods on the lower Lachlan and Murrumbidgee rivers by absorbing water and slowly releasing it back into the river system. We observed this effect first hand. In the first half of the trip, we saw that in numerous places turbid water was flowing from the river into adjacent wetlands. On approach to Balranald, clear, tannin-coloured water was flowing from the wetlands back into the river. Many egrets, herons and spoonbills were seen nesting.

On the second day we spotted a shelter over a tree trunk. It was a 'large arrow' blaze tree with a plaque stating it was the site where Sturt launched his boats into the Murrumbidgee in 1830. I had been under the impression from history books that the precise location of the site was uncertain. The plaque, dated 2012, was installed by the 'Toopuntul Historical Trust'. However, I have not yet been able to find any further information about this location, the plaque or the 'Toopuntul Historical Trust'! Strange, as I would have thought it would be a site of great historical



Reed beds

interest. Nevertheless, Sturt's land journey following the Murrumbidgee ended here due to boggy ground. They launched their whale boat and a skiff and headed downstream, eventually reaching the mouth of the Murray before rowing back upstream to this point, arriving 77 days after they left. The party who had remained at the launch site had departed, so Sturt and his men, by now exhausted and starving, had no alternative but to continue rowing upstream another 500 km to present day Narrandera. Apart from solving the mystery of where the inland rivers flowed, Sturt's 3,400 km boat journey was an incredible feat of endurance and remains one of the longest ever on Australian rivers.

Another highlight of the second day was reaching the Lachlan River confluence. When I had passed here in 2008 on a low river, the Lachlan was a snag-choked creek. Now it was full of water and we paddled it for a few hundred metres



Left: Sturt blaze tree

Above: Ring tree



and found a beautiful campsite. There was a gentle current flowing upstream and into wetlands around our campsite. It would have been nice to paddle further up the Lachlan towards Great Cumbungi Swamp.

On the third day we had a close call. In calm conditions, a large tree fell across the river just behind Keith and I. Joy, who was paddling behind us, had a lucky escape. Leaves of the outermost limbs brushed her kayak but no damage was done. Joy received an extra ration of wine that night.

At the end of the third day, we reached a man-made obstacle, Redbank Weir.

Due to the high river levels the weir gates had been lifted but only high enough for us to float our kayaks underneath on the gentle current. However, we were compensated by having lush lawns to camp on.

The remaining three days were largely uneventful. The forecast heavy rain fell mainly at night and the final day was in perfect weather with stunning reflections. This is a trip I would happily repeat, especially at high water levels where you can see the landscape come to life.

Mike Bremers

Blaze Tree

Captain Charles Sturt set off from Sydney on his second expedition of Australia's interior on the 3rd of November 1829. In search of a purposed inland shoal sea, Sturt and his party were to follow the waters of the Murrumbidgee River, as far as possible over land, which it was hoped would run into the sea.

Sturt traversed the Goulburn Plains and Yass Plains before reaching the Murrumbidgee near Gundagai. His party then paralleled the river, arriving at this site on the 28th of December. Unable to proceed further because of the boggy ground and the Great Cumbungi Swamp beyond, Sturt's party spent the next seven days assembling a 27' Whaler style boat they had conveyed by dray together with a skiff half the size, constructed from a tree felled nearby.

With Clayton, Harris, Hopkinson, Fraser and prisoners Mulholland and Macnamee, Sturt boarded the boats and headed downstream. The remainder of the party were left at the camp under the control of Robert Harris. A large arrow blaze was marked to indicate the entry site to the river which can still be easily seen.

Despite troubles with local aboriginal tribes and other misadventures, Sturt travelled through to the mouth of the Murray before turning around and rowing back up the Murray and Murrumbidgee Rivers to this site. They arrived exhausted and without provisions on the 23rd of April, only to find the ground party had left. Having already rowed an estimated 2,000 miles against the currents, they continued on upstream finally meeting up with Robert Harris on the 28th of May 1830.

While not located within the Darling Basin, Sturt's contention of an inland sea later proved a reality with the discovery of Lake Eyre and its surrounding lake system.

Erected by the Toopuntul Historical Trust in January 2012

Charles Sturt
(1795 - 1869)



NPA people

Walking bug led to wider horizons

Life Member Max Lawrence talks to Allan Sharp about influences on his life as a passionate bushwalker and environmentalist.

Raised on the family farm near Yass, Max Lawrence watched the effects on the surrounding landscape of grazing, cropping and fire on what was left of the native vegetation, especially the remaining ancient eucalypts. Later, working as an economist for a federal government agricultural research bureau, Max travelled extensively around Australia, especially in the 1960s and 70s, interviewing farmers and graziers and visiting rural industries for surveys. A lot of what he saw further stirred his environmental consciousness.

'One memorable trip was a light aircraft run in 1970 through the pastoral stations of the WA Goldfields and Pilbara for a sheep survey. One guy told me he was running around 15,000 sheep, where his father before the war had been running 45,000 on the same lease. His dad thought this was sustainable. Wrong; fodder in the form of perennial shrubs ('top feed') once chewed on is slow to replenish, especially when it may not rain for years.

'On the same trip another bloke told me he had mustered the mountain on his run by dropping explosives from his plane. Tally was 3,000 sheep and seven prospectors – so he said. Today sheep in the Pilbara have been largely replaced by beef cattle, feral goats and mines.'

In the early 2000s, now being grey nomads, Max and wife Marie took their caravan through much the same area of WA and found the mining industries also had wrought big changes to the landscape – mountains of overburden visible from miles away, and bitumen highways and railways where once were dirt tracks.

'Lots of dead animals and livestock along the roads, but we noted that goats, cattle and emus seemed to have much better road sense than kangaroos and sheep,' Max said.

'Overstocking, introducing ferals and blowing up the countryside isn't going to help the environment, especially in fragile semi-desert regions such as the Pilbara and the Eastern Goldfields, or for that matter, Central Queensland,

or even the Hunter Valley. Neither will running down our precious water resources on irrigation for industries with often low profitability, and subject to highly dubious water trading arrangements.'

In mid-life Max started walking up the hills in what is now Canberra Nature Park to keep fit. 'I soon caught the bug and sought wider horizons. A mate, Col McAlister, was an NPA member, and he suggested I join.

'Bushwalking was my main interest at the time and I found companions in the NPA fraternity who quickly became close and lasting friends. My wish to expand my walking horizons was fulfilled with bells on. Most of these lovely people were passionate environmentalists, and for me the contagion fed on my own experiences of rural Australia.'

Max served as Secretary for 4 years and became a regular walks leader and convener of the Outings Subcommittee from 1996 to 2001. He also became a prolific recorder of NPA events through his photographs and reports – though, surprisingly, he claims never to have been a passionate photographer. 'I've only ever had one camera at a time and never a fancy one,' he said. 'I just collect images of where I've been, what I've seen, and my friends and family' he said.

Max also played a leading role in collating the outstanding photos in one of NPA's finest publications *Namadgi: a National Park for the National Capital*. And as Editor of the *NPA Bulletin* from 2008 to 2014, Max oversaw its transition to a full-colour magazine.

Max was made an NPA Life Member in 2015. Noting his many contributions to NPA, the citation added that walks led by Max were particularly popular because of his 'natural affability and good rapport with co-walkers'.

Looking to the future, Max said NPA's primary focus should continue to be 'on our own backyard'. 'We need to continue to provide hands-on opportunities for our members to get out there and experience what nature has to offer,' he said. 'A vigorous walks program and work parties are the key to this.

'Because of the ACT's relatively small geographic extent our members also have a particular interest in protecting parks and reserves in surrounding NSW, notably Kosciuszko. So, we need to collaborate with NPA NSW on such matters.

'Also, to the extent that broad issues such as climate change affect all of us, NPA ACT should make some contribution with the various state NPAs to ensuring that nationally we are headed in the right direction,' he said.

And his personal highlights as an NPA member? 'Walks, work parties and friendships.'



Max (far left) on the ACT section of the Great Australian Bushwalk, 2006

Max at Barron Pass on the way to Frenchmans Cap, Tasmania, 2007. He made it!



NPA outings program

Bushwalk grading guide **March – June 2022**



Distance grading (per day)

- 1 up to 10 km
- 2 10 km to 15 km
- 3 15 km to 20 km
- 4 above 20 km

Terrain grading

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| A Road, fire trail or track | E Rock scrambling |
| B Open forest | F Exploratory |
| C Light scrub | |
| D Patches of thick scrub, regrowth | |

Day walks

Carry lunch and snacks, drinks, protective clothing, a first aid kit and any required medication.

Pack walks

Two or more days. Carry all food and camping requirements. CONTACT LEADER EARLY.

Car camps

Facilities often limited. Vehicles taken to site can be used for camping. CONTACT LEADER EARLY.

Work parties

Carry items as for day walks plus work gloves and any tools required. Work party details and location sometimes change, check NPA website, www.npaact.org.au, for any last minute changes.

Other activities

include ski trips, canoe trips, nature rambles and environment or field guide studies.

Short notice walks

To volunteer to lead a short notice walk, or to have your name added to the short notice walks alert list, email outings@npaact.org.au

Wednesday walks (WW)

Medium or somewhat harder walks arranged on a joint NPA, BBC (*Brindabella Bushwalking Club*) and CBC (*Canberra Bushwalking Club*) basis for fit and experienced club walkers. Notification and details are only emailed to members registered for WW. Only NPA-hosted WW are shown in this program. For WW email registration, contact the *Outings Convener*, outings@npaact.org.au.

Transport

The NPA suggests a passenger contribution to transport costs of **40 cents per kilometre** for the distance driven divided by the number of occupants of the car including the driver, rounded to the nearest dollar. The amount may be varied at the discretion of the leader. Drive and walk distances shown in the program are approximate for return journeys.

NPA ACT members undertaking walks or other activities in this program are advised they should have **PRIVATE HEALTH**

INSURANCE or, at least, **AMBULANCE COVER** in case of an accident requiring evacuation by ambulance or helicopter.

Points to note:

Please help keep our outings program alive by volunteering to lead outings. New leaders are welcome. The *Outings Convener* is happy to suggest locations suitable for a walk if you do not have something in mind. Feel free to send in suggestions for outings with a suggested date to the *Outings Convener* by email to outings@npaact.org.au.

All persons joining an outing of the *National Parks Association of the ACT* do so as volunteers in all respects and as such accept responsibility for any injury howsoever incurred and the National Parks Association of the ACT, its office bearers and appointed leaders, are absolved from any liability in respect of injury or damage suffered whilst engaged in any such outing.

In voluntarily participating in these activities conducted by the NPA ACT, participants should be aware that they could be exposed to risks that could lead to injury, illness or death or to loss of or damage to property. These risks could include but are not limited to: slippery and/or uneven surfaces, rocks being dislodged, falling at edges of cliffs or drops or elsewhere, risks associated with crossing creeks, hypothermia, heat exhaustion and the risks associated with any of the Special Hazards listed on the *Attendance Record and Risk Waiver Form* provided by the leader at the activity.

To minimise these risks participants should endeavour to ensure that the activity is within their capabilities and that they are carrying food, water, equipment, clothing and footwear appropriate to the activity. Participants should advise the leader if they are taking any medication or have any physical or other limitation that might affect their participation in the activity. Participants should make every effort to remain with the rest of the party during the activity and accept the instructions of the leader. By signing the *Attendance Record and Risk Waiver Form* participants agree that they understand these requirements and have considered the risks before choosing to sign the form and waive any claim for damages arising from the activity that they might have against the association, the leader or any other participants in tort or contract.

Children under 18 years of age are welcome to come on NPA ACT activities provided they are accompanied by a parent, guardian or close relative who will be required to sign a specific Risk Waiver for a Child form.

Check-in/Emergency contact:

Leaders can borrow the NPA's Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) from Brian Slee, 6281 0719, brianslee@iprimus.com.au.

In the event that an outing party returns late, the first point of contact for concerned family members is NPA's Check-in/Emergency Contact Officer, not the police or National Parks service.

To check the status of an overdue walk, contact Mike Bremers, 0428 923 408, outings@npaact.org.au or Brian Slee (contact as above). Leaders should check in by contacting the Check-in Officer (text or email will suffice) at completion of outing. Leaders should also email their signed ATTENDANCE RECORD AND RISK WAIVER FORM to Brian as above.

COVID-19 arrangements:

The following information sets out the current arrangements for outings in the NPA ACT walks program under restrictions on community activities introduced by the ACT Government aimed at reducing the risk of transmission of the COVID-19 virus. Walk descriptions will not always contain a meeting place or time, with this information being made available by contacting the leader.

Walkers wishing to participate in a walk need to read these arrangements and the risk waiver on the Attendance and Risk Waiver form available at [https://www.npaact.org.au/res/File/2017/Attendance%20Form\(2017\).pdf](https://www.npaact.org.au/res/File/2017/Attendance%20Form(2017).pdf), then contact the leader to register, providing their name and a contact phone number.

Walkers are advised that they should not register with the leader (or attend the walk) if they have or have had flu-like symptoms such as a fever with a cough, sore throat or shortness of breath in the previous 2 weeks. For further information see the ACT Government COVID-19 website (<https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/>). Walkers are reminded that social distancing requirements will be in force on the walk and they are expected to practise good hygiene.

Participation in the walk will be considered acceptance of these arrangements and the risk waiver.

NPA outings program March – June 2022 (page 2 of 4)

<p>5 March Saturday walk</p> 	<p>Corang circuit From Wog Wog entrance to Morton National Park we follow track to Corang Peak for great views, and then scramble down Conglomerate Slope to Canowie Brook and continue to Many Rock Ribs on Corang River. Return to Wog Wog downstream from here. The walk, which will take about 8 hours, is mostly on track or footpad, some of which may be overgrown. Distance 25 km and total climb about 650 m. Early start essential. Limit: 8. Contact leader, preferably by email, by 3 March.</p>	<p>Map: Corang 1:25,000 Grading: 4A/D/E Drive: 220 km, \$88 per car Leader: Philip Gatenby Contact: 0401 415 446 or philip.gatenby@gmail.com</p>
<p>12 March Saturday work party</p> 	<p>Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group Meet 9 am at Namadgi Visitor Centre. Control (cutting and dabbing) of woody weeds at site to be determined in Gudgenby Valley. Car-pooling available for the journey there; tools will be provided. Contact leader for registration arrangements.</p>	<p>Leader: Doug Brown Contact: 6247 0239 or kambalda@tpg.com.au</p>
<p>12–14 March Pack walk</p> 	<p>Broken Dam Hut A two-night pack walk into Broken Dam Hut with possible visits to the ruins of Four Mile Hut and Tabletop Mountain. Contact leader for arrangements.</p>	<p>Maps: Cabramurra, Denison 1:25,000 Grading: 2A/B Drive: 428 km, \$168 per car Leader: Steven Forst Contact: 0428 195 236 or steven.forst@inet.net.au</p>
<p>19 March Saturday walk</p>	<p>Blundells Flat to Mount Coree A walk up the south-eastern spur of Mount Coree, following the old route described in CBC's 1974 book, <i>Bushwalking Near Canberra</i>. 650 m of climbing, first on fire trail, then off-track. Some scrub. Morning tea with great views from Mount Coree. Descend via ACT–NSW border to Curries Road to head back to starting point. Contact leader by 17 March, preferably by email, for meeting place and time.</p>	<p>Map: Cotter Dam 1:25,000 Grading: 2A/D/E/F Drive: 60 km, \$24 per car Leader: Rod Griffiths Contact: 0410 875 731 or rod.blackdog@gmail.com</p>
<p>20 March Sunday morning walk</p> 	<p>Exploring Parliament House surrounds Meet at 9 am on left-hand side of front forecourt of Parliament House. Remnant vegetation, historic remains and roses: exploring the surrounds of Parliament House. 3–4 hours, 8 km. Optional lunch at conclusion. Contact leader by 18 March, preferably by email, to register for walk and optional lunch.</p>	<p>Leader: Rosemary Hollow Contact: 0413 977 708 or rosiehollow@gmail.com</p>
<p>21–25 March Pack walk</p> 	<p>Hoddles Castle and Island Mountain This is a partly exploratory walk in the Budawangs from Nerriga entrance to Morton National Park. Aim is to spend two nights near Hoddles Castle and two nights near Vines Creek, exploring, on day walks, Mount Hoddle and Island Mountain. While some of the walk is on track (which may be overgrown in places), rock scrambling and finding routes through cliff lines will be involved, and thick scrub may be encountered. For experienced off-track walkers. More details available closer to date. Limit of 8. Contact leader, preferably by email, by 18 March.</p>	<p>Map: Endrick 1:25,000 Grading: 2A/D/E/F Drive: 260 km, \$104 per car Leader: Philip Gatenby Contact: 0401 415 446 or philip.gatenby@gmail.com</p>
<p>26 March Saturday work party</p> 	<p>Pryors Hut area Pine control Meet 8 am at Dillon Close, off Namatjira Drive, Weston. The NPA last visited this site in 2014. The old pine arboretum adjacent to Pryors Hut continues to be a source of wilding pines. This work party will locate and/or remove the wildings (depending on size of individual trees). Hand saw and loppers will be provided, just bring gloves.</p>	<p>Drive: 130 km, \$52 per car Leader: Brian Slee Contact: 6281 0719 or brianslee@iprimus.com.au</p>
<p>27 March Sunday walk</p>	<p>Tuggeranong Hill Meet 9 am at electricity substation off Callister Cres, Theodore. A walk in two parts. Initially climb NW up and over Tuggeranong Hill and return to substation on management track around back of Conder. About 5 km with 160 m climb, mostly on track or rocky footpad. From substation then travel NE, climb about 100 m to another unnamed summit and continue off-track to the Aboriginal axe-grinding grooves near Monaro Highway. Return to cars via management track behind houses. Limit of 12, book with leader by 22 March.</p>	<p>Map: Tuggeranong 1:25,000 Grading: 2A/C Leader: Mike S Contact: 0412 179 907 or msmith@netspeed.com.au</p>
<p>3 April Sunday walk</p> 	<p>Blue Gum Hill Meet 7:30 am at Lanyon Marketplace car park, Conder. Blue Gum Hill is an obvious mountain just north of Booroomba Rocks. Starting from Smokers Trail (off Corin Dam Road) this is an off-track walk with expansive views. Full day's walk and participants should have previous off-track experience. Contact leader, preferably by email, by 1 April.</p>	<p>Map: Corin Dam 1:25,000 Grading: 2D/C Drive: 50 km, \$20 per car Leader: Rod Griffiths Contact: 0410 875 731 or rod.blackdog@gmail.com</p>

NPA outings program March – June 2022 (page 3 of 4)

<p>9 April Saturday walk</p> 	<p>Serenity Rocks A semi-circuit through Tallaganda State Forest, with its old trees and ferns, to Serenity Rocks for views to Mount Palerang. Though all on track, about half of the track is narrow, steep and has loose rubble. Five creek crossings 1 to 2 m wide. 10 km. Contact leader for arrangements.</p>	<p>Map: Bombay 1:25,000 Grading: 2A Drive: 84 km, \$34 per car Leader: Linda Groom Contact: 6281 4917 or lbgroom@gmail.com</p>
<p>9 April Saturday work party</p>	<p>Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group Meet 9 am at Namadgi Visitor Centre. Control (cutting and dabbing) of woody weeds at site to be determined in Gudgenby Valley. Car-pooling available for the journey there; tools will be provided. Contact leader for registration arrangements.</p>	<p>Leader: Doug Brown Contact: 6247 0239 or kambalda@tpg.com.au</p>
<p>23 April Saturday work party</p> 	<p>Bendora Arboretum exotics control Meet 8:15 am at Dillon Close, off Namatjira Drive, Weston. This is a regular work site for the NPA. The work party will involve removing wilding pines from around Bendora Arboretum and eucs and other natives from within. Please bring gloves; all other tools will be provided. Book with the leader by 21 April.</p>	<p>Drive: 92 km, \$38 per car. Leader: Martin Chalk Contact: 0411 161 056</p>
<p>24 April Sunday walk</p> 	<p>Brindabella ramble Meet at Molonglo Park and Ride carpark, east off Kirkpatrick Street just off Cotter Road, departing 8:30 am. A walk in the cooler tall mountain forests of some south-eastern facing folds of the Brindabella Range, mainly on fire trail following Old Mill Road, Warks Road and Blundells Creek Road.</p>	<p>Maps: Cotter, Tidbinbilla 1:25,000 Grading: 3A Drive: 85km, \$35 per car. Leader: Steven Forst Contact: 0428 195 236 or steven.forst@inet.net.au</p>
<p>27 April Wednesday walks</p>	<p>Joint NPA / BBC / CBC activity <i>Details are emailed to those on the Wednesday Walks email list. Otherwise contact leaders.</i></p>	<p>Medium/hard walk Leader: Philip Gatenby Contact: 0414 415 446 or philip.gatenby@gmail.com Easy/medium walk Leader: Mike S Contact: 0412 179 907</p>
<p>27–29 April Pack walk</p> 	<p>Memorial walk for Geoff Hope (NPA/CBC) An easy walk to Dunns Flat to celebrate the life of Geoff Hope. Dunns Flat in Kosciuszko National Park, below Mount Bimberi, was one of his major research sites. The walk there is about 6 km on an undulating fire trail. Walk out same way. Program for middle day will be a walk to Murray Gap, and for the more energetic to Bimberi Peak (1,913 m). Contact leader for arrangements.</p>	<p>Map: Rendezvous Ck 1:25,000 Grading: 1A Drive: TBA Leaders: Di Thompson, Linda Groom Contact: Di Thompson 0401 590 046 or garyt@inet.net.au</p>
<p>1 May Sunday walk</p> 	<p>Coolleman Ridge traverse Meet 8 am at Kambah Village shops. An opportunity to stroll the ridges that make up Coolleman Ridge Nature Reserve. There are so many views! This walk is all on track and starts with Mount Arawang to get us to the top of the ridge. An undulating morning's walk. Bring water and morning tea. Contact leader, preferably by email, by 29 April.</p>	<p>Map: Canberra 1:25,000 Grading: 2A Leader: Rod Griffiths Contact: 0410 875 731 or rod.blackdog@gmail.com</p>
<p>7 May Saturday walk</p> 	<p>Tinderry Peak Walk follows Round Flat Fire Trail for a couple of km before a steep climb to a rocky outcrop. We then walk NW for 2 km through scrub which is thick in places, followed by a rock scramble to Tinderry Peak (1,619 m). Return route is mostly south from peak, merging with the fire trail about a km from the cars. Walk is mostly off-track, with one section of mild exposure on climb to summit. Suitable for experienced off-track walkers. Distance about 15 km, total climb about 600 m. Limit of 8. Contact leader, preferably by email, by 5 May.</p>	<p>Map: Tinderry 1:25,000 Grading: 3A/D/E Drive: 140 km, \$56 per car Leader: Philip Gatenby Contact: 0401 415 446 or philip.gatenby@gmail.com</p>
<p>14 May Saturday work party</p>	<p>Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group Meet 9 am at Namadgi Visitor Centre. Control (cutting and dabbing) of woody weeds at site to be determined in Gudgenby Valley. Car-pooling available for the journey there; tools will be provided. Contact leader for registration arrangements.</p>	<p>Leader: Doug Brown Contact: 6247 0239 or kambalda@tpg.com.au</p>
<p>14 May Saturday walk</p> 	<p>Calvary ruins Meet 8:30 am at Kambah Village shops. A relatively easy walk to the 'pise' walls which are all that remain of Michael & Susan Maloney's 1903 Calvary homestead in the southern Bullen Range. After visiting the ruins we will continue along Bullen Range to Brett Trig for lunch. Return via Barnes Hill. The walk is mostly on fire trail or in open country. Around 200 m climb.</p>	<p>Map: Tuggeranong 1:25,000 Grading: 2A/B Drive: 30 km, \$12 per car Leader: Mike S Contact: 0412 179 907</p>

NPA outings program March – June 2022 (page 4 of 4)

<p>15 May Sunday walk</p> 	<p>Weston to the Arboretum Meet 9:30 am at Dillon Close, Weston [UBD map 67 J11]. Follow paths north to Weston Ponds, cross the Molonglo and have lunch on Dairy Farmers Hill. Return via various arboretum plantations, Barrer and Bold Hills. 11 km, a couple of steep climbs. Afternoon tea at Sakeena's, Cooleman Court.</p>	<p>Map: UBD Canberra street map Grading: 2A/B/C Leader: Brian Slee Contact: 6281 0719 or brianslee@iprimus.com.au</p>
<p>21 May Saturday walk</p> 	<p>Booths Hill From Brandy Flat south car park walk off-track across Dry Creek and up onto Booth Range. Here we turn north and climb Booths Hill. Head west then SW steeply down to Brandy Flat Trail where it crosses Dry Creek, about a km from the cars. Patches of thick scrub, burnt forest, rocks and scree to negotiate. Crossing Dry Creek may result in wet feet. Climb 850 m, distance 12 km. Expect to be walking about 7 hours. For experienced off-track walkers. Contact leader, preferably by email, by 19 May. Limit of 12.</p>	<p>Map: Michelago 1:25,000 Grading: 2A/D/E Drive: 100 km, \$40 per car Leader: Philip Gatenby Contact: 0401 415 446 or philip.gatenby@gmail.com</p>
<p>22 May Sunday walk</p> 	<p>Square Rock Meet 9:30 am at Lanyon Shops car park, adjacent to Tharwa Drive and Box Hill Ave roundabout. Walk starts at Square Rock car park, Corin Road, and is all on track, easy to moderate. Lunch with views at Square Rock. Contact leader by Saturday.</p>	<p>Map: Corin Dam 1:25,000 Grading: 1A Drive: 50 km, \$20 per car Leader: Ian Bell Contact: bellit@bigpond.com</p>
<p>28 May Saturday work party</p> 	<p>Moores Hill weed control Meet 8:15 am at Dillon Close, off Namatjira Drive, Weston. Moores Hill is located close to the Cotter Camp Ground and is the site of a range of woody weeds. We last visited the site in 2018. Bring gloves; all other tools will be provided. Book with leader by 26 May.</p>	<p>Drive: 32 km, \$14 per car Leader: Brian Slee Contact: 6281 0719 or brianslee@iprimus.com.au</p>
<p>5 June Sunday morning walk</p> 	<p>Ginninderry to Shepherds Lookout Meet 8:30 am at The Link carpark, McClymont Way, Strathnairn [UBD map 36, C11]. Follow newly established track south, contouring around gullies descending west, to Shepherds Lookout. Great views of Murrumbidgee and mountains the whole way. Return same route. Easy grades, 9 km. Brunch at Strathnairn Cafe.</p>	<p>Map: UBD Canberra street map Grading: 1A Leader: Brian Slee Contact: 6281 0719 or brianslee@iprimus.com.au</p>
<p>11 June Saturday work party</p> 	<p>Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group Meet 9 am at Namadgi Visitor Centre. Removal of damaged enclosure at site to be determined in the Gudgenby Valley. Car-pooling available for the journey there; tools will be provided. Contact leader for registration arrangements.</p>	<p>Leader: Doug Brown Contact: 6247 0239 or kambalda@tpg.com.au</p>
<p>22 June Wednesday walks</p> 	<p>Joint NPA / BBC / CBC activity <i>Details are emailed to those on the Wednesday Walks email list. Otherwise contact leaders.</i></p>	<p>Medium/hard walk Leader: Margaret Power Contact: 0448 924 357 or power000@tpg.com.au Easy/medium walk Leader: Steven Forst Contact: 0428 195 236 or steven.forst@inet.net.au</p>
<p>25 June Saturday work party</p> 	<p>Bullen Range Nature Reserve fence removal Meet 9 am at corner of Athllon and Learmonth Drives, Kambah. This work party is a continuation of work to remove redundant stock fences in Murrumbidgee River Corridor. Location of work party will be advised closer to the date. Bring gloves – wire cutters, post pullers, will be provided. Book with leader by 23 June.</p>	<p>Drive: 25 km, \$10 per car Leader: Michaela Popham Contact: 0413 537 333</p>



Sunset, Shepherds Lookout. Photo by Dave Morris



Ginninderry, the conservation reserve and the Murrumbidgee

Strathnairn, the suburb, spreading west. Photos by Brian Slee

Not only does Ginninderra Falls have outstanding scenic value but it is also a site of considerable biodiversity, and has cultural significance to the Ngunnawal traditional owners. Surveys recorded 21 reptile species, 9 native mammals, 3 species of frogs, 207 plant species (Ginninderra Catchment Group survey), and 95 bird species (Kevin Mills report for Riverview).

The Ginninderra Falls Association has called for a national park to protect the biodiversity values of Ginninderra Falls and the adjoining Murrumbidgee river corridor, including both sides of the streams. The Murrumbidgee in the ACT has been protected by a reserve on both banks, and by mostly keeping urban development at least a kilometre away from the river. Canberra's older districts have drainage into a central basin, from which water is, or could be, purified and its flow managed by a centralised Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) system. Thus, flow and pollutants are, or can be, controlled before water reaches the Murrumbidgee. It seems logical that if the ACT develops land beyond its border to Ginninderra Creek, the waterways should have similar protection to land in the ACT, i.e. a buffer of at least a kilometre between urban development and the waterways.

However, pressure for more urban development has led to Molonglo and Ginninderry, which will be closer to the rivers, and will have more distributed drainage systems, with a number of smaller WSUD installations, which will be more difficult to monitor and maintain, or upgrade if better treatment is needed in future. Furthermore, the ACT Government has been buying farming properties on the western edge of Canberra, and is reviewing planning policy for lands adjoining the Murrumbidgee, between the Molonglo and Tuggeranong. This suggests that more urban development close to the Murrumbidgee is planned.

Ginninderry's EPBC assessment does not consider the effect of the development on nearby natural areas. Nor does it consider the cumulative effect of multiple developments, such as the recent series of urban developments in rural land to the north and west of Canberra. It considers only those species which are nationally declared endangered or vulnerable. It is well-known that bushland areas adjacent to urban areas tend to become degraded, due to runoff, weed dispersal, intrusion of domestic animals, and control burning.

The Ginninderry Conservation Reserve contains considerable areas of habitat of the Pink-tailed Worm-lizard, a vulnerable species listed under the EPBC. Much of this habitat adjoins the urban area, making it vulnerable to degradation due to adjacent urbanisation.

The increase in impermeable surfaces due to urbanisation will result in a three-fold increase in runoff. Although the development is planned to comply with the ACT's WSUD Code, which limits pollutants and maximum flow, and will reuse some stormwater, the total flow and frequency of flows will increase. These are likely to lead to weed growth and erosion of the gullies which drop 180 m from the

development to the Murrumbidgee, with slopes of up to 35 degrees.

The Little Eagle is also a declared vulnerable species in NSW and the ACT. An eagle previously nested in a pine tree near Strathnairn Arts Centre but abandoned the nest about the time construction began. Urban developments in northern Canberra are reducing the foraging areas available to Little Eagles when feeding their young at the nest. Although Little Eagles continue to nest in the ACT, breeding success has been lower in the past few years than in a similar area near Armidale.

Ginninderry complies with current fire building regulations. However, modelling has shown that the slopes between Ginninderry and the Murrumbidgee with their north-westerly aspect can facilitate dynamic fire propagation and intense ember attack, as seen in major fires since 2003. But fire regulations have not been changed to allow for this. It is likely that fire management to mitigate against this increased risk will lead to degradation of the reserve.

With a population of 30,000 in Ginninderry, and more planned for northern Canberra, one needs to ask whether the Ginninderry Conservation Reserve will be large enough to cater for the likely crowds. The reserve is potentially smaller than the range of a Rosenberg's Monitor, a vulnerable reptile recorded in the area.

In 2012, the NPWS declined to show an interest in acquiring land for a Ginninderra Falls National Park, or to recognise the area's importance. However, quoting the Kevin Mills report:

The proposed Murrumbidgee River Corridor and Woodland Reserve is an important link in the region's system of connectivity between natural habitat areas. It is part of a larger riparian corridor system stretching across the north-western part of the ACT, including several significant natural and semi-natural areas along the Murrumbidgee and (lower) Molonglo Rivers and also Ginninderra Creek.

Dave Kelly

Ginninderra Falls Association www.ginninderra.org.au

The Murrumbidgee from viewpoint on new Ginninderry to Shepherds Lookout track





Bushwalk reports

Stoney Creek to Murrumbidgee River

Descending Deep Creek fire trail. Photo by Kevin McCue

Date: 31 October 2021

Participants: Brian Slee (leader), Tony Agostino, Cynthia Breheny, Mike Bremers, Marlene Eggert, Rod Griffiths, Jill Jackson, Joanna Korecki, Sonja Lenz, Peter May, Kevin McCue, Phillip Starr, Jennifer Watson

Weather: Mild and sunny.

After I reced this walk with Phillip Starr, who led, I decided that on any rerun I would take the high ground for the outward journey in order to retain the great view, beyond the Murrumbidgee, of a long stretch of the Brindabellas. It proved to be a good option.

The land west of Mount Stromlo, sloping down to the Murrumbidgee, is occupied by rehabilitated forests and a nature reserve. Extending north from Cotter Road, like a tongue in the middle of all this public land, are grazing leases secured by tightly stretched barb wire fences, often meshed to the ground and electrified.

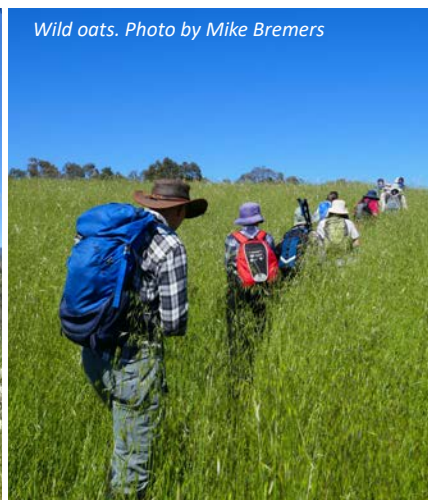
After gathering at 9 am at 'Spring Valley' turnoff on Uriarra Road, we got off to a good start, finding nice displays of wildflowers even before turning onto Deep Creek fire trail. Kevin took a bow for spotting the first orchid. Once over the stile at the bottom of the descent we found ourselves in chest-high wild oats, still vivid green. The move onto high

open ground from there was quite rewarding. The grazing leases extend part of the way down the slope so following the fence west involves some steep slopes in and out of gullies. Eventually we set ourselves up on a high point at 11 am for morning tea in a wonderfully scenic spot, looking down the Murrumbidgee.

Next objective was 'Eucalypt Hill' where a remarkable tree has emerged from a rocky peak. Lunch at 12:30 pm was to be beside the Murrumbidgee but having found a track onto a promising headland, the descent was too steep and we settled for a more distant view of the river. Nevertheless, we again lucked out with a good one. No snakes seen all day but on the return we were kept entertained by hovering kestrels and the aerobatics of a Black-shouldered Kite. The advance party came across a black sow and her three scurrying tan piglets while others flushed quails out of grassy



'Eucalypt Hill'. Photo by Brian Slee



Wild oats. Photo by Mike Bremers



Climbing stile. Photo by Kevin McCue

undergrowth. Having covered 11 km, we were back at the cars at 2:45 pm. Half the group adjourned to 'Morning Dew', Denman Prospect, for coffee.

An outing worth repeating as a walk-through to Casuarina Sands. Beware, says Rod Griffiths, we may soon be sharing the area with ambitious mountain bikers.

Brian Slee



Morning tea spot. Photo by Joanna Korecki

Circumnavigating Mount Mugga Mugga

Date: 16 January 2022

Participants: Brian Slee (leader), Isobel Crawford, Marlene Eggert, Joanna Korecki, Sonja Lenz, Kevin McCue, Michaela Popham, Margaret Power, Deidre Shaw, Simone Whyte

Weather: Cloudy, warm, humid.

From O'Malley, the Canberra Centenary (CC) Trail originally tracked south of Mount Mugga Mugga (812 m) before connecting to the quarry road leading to Mugga Lane. The road was fenced off about 2017 so the CC was relocated west of the mountain before descending to Mugga Lane. When preparing this walk for NPA, I relied on the original map (still unamended on the web), forgetting part of the CC had been closed. That proved to be an embuggerance but we nevertheless managed to circle Mugga Mugga.

Having met at Callemonda Rise at 8:30 am and welcomed a new member, we began with a short excursion west to check whether the beautiful future envisaged for Scrivener Hill had been realised. Alas, the peak was crammed with thistles and verbascum, taller than shrubs and taller than some of our participants. Needs more than a 'Friends of' group to come to the rescue. Happily, the planted eucalypts are thriving. Cute roos lingered, a rabbit fled.

As we returned east to connect to the CC, Gang-gangs grated a greeting, followed by the sweet song of a butcherbird. The poorly maintained route rose gently north to Hindmarsh Drive for fine views over the city. Cyclists filed past. We descended east through nice country to within sight of Symonston prison where we turned and tracked south to the noisy Dog Hotel and Dog Pound.



Wishing to avoid walking beside Mugga Lane, we waded through a grassy paddock to the quarry road entrance. It was now obvious that the way forward was beside the road but fortunately it was for only a few hundred metres. We crossed into Callum Brae Nature Reserve for morning tea near one of the powder magazines.

Kevin. Photo by Brian Slee



Scrivener Hill. Photo by Kevin McCue

Returning to Canberra Nature Park, we rounded the reservoir; from there all were in favour of following the valley west rather than climbing the ridge. Threading our way through the clutter of an abandoned horse riding establishment, we found the old track and followed it back to the start, arriving 11:30 am, just as the sun was emerging; 7 km. Along the way the full extent of quarrying on the mountain became apparent. A kestrel kept watch over us.

Brunch at Mawson had been scheduled but was abandoned in face of surging COVID-19 cases. A walk worth repeating if an earlier entrance into Callum Brae could be found which would obviate the need to walk beside often busy Mugga Lane.

Brian Slee



Mount Budawang

Date: Saturday 7 August 2021

Participants: Philip Gatenby (leader), Geoff Barker, Marlene Eggert, Jan Gatenby, Brian Slee

Weather: Sunny and cool.

Driving along Kings Highway towards the coast, the bulk of Mount Budawang, in Budawang National Park, is prominent to the left of the road from about Doughboy onwards. At 1,138 m, it is the high point of the Budawang Range, that part of the coastal escarpment roughly between Clyde Mountain and the sandstone mesas of the Budawangs proper.

A vehicular track goes to its top to service a Rural Fire Service communication facility. It also serves as a walking track, described on the NPWS website as 'bushwalking at its best ... threading through a diverse range of environments – grassy woodland, wet gullies, montane forest and grassland at the top.'

Four of us met at Queanbeyan and Geoff joined us in Braidwood. The walk starts on aptly named Budawang Road, a few kilometres south-east of Mongarlowe. The website says it is possible to drive the first three km of the walk and set out from the park boundary but this part of the track can be, and was, very muddy, so we chose to walk, passing through a vivid green rural landscape dotted with Blackwoods and occasional glimpses of Mount Budawang in the sparkling morning light.

Just beyond this rural landscape and soon after the track enters bush were the remains of an old Volvo. Once inside the park boundary the climb starts. Beside the track Tall Everlasting Daisy (*Coronidium elatumelatum*) threatened to bloom and further up flashes of red in the undergrowth turned out to be flowering Common Heath (*Epacris impressa*). As we continued to climb our wilderness experience was briefly shattered by a passing truck, on its way to the summit's communication facility.

It was windy on top but views in all directions were superb – the coast, the Budawangs and westwards to the Great Dividing Range. Braidwood's hill, Mount Gillamatong, stood out. Mount Budawang's top is home to a rare native, Budawang Wallaby-grass (*Plinthanthesis rodwayi*), found only here and on nearby Currockbilly. As a result of the fires, and in contrast to previous trips, the shrubs on the summit were now skeletal.

Rather than retrace our morning steps we walked to the west, off-track down a loose rocky slope into the headwaters of Currowan Creek. Following the fires of summer 2019–20, scrub was not a problem, and blackened eucalypts were sprouting epicormic growth. Currowan Creek rises on the western side of Mount Budawang, initially flows north, then west, south and east into the Clyde River about 10 km upstream of Nelligen. We joined it on its northerly trajectory. Tree Ferns were making a spectacular comeback either side of the creek, as were *Banksia spinulosa* and a great variety of other shrubs passed on the way back to the main track.

Perhaps not bushwalking at its best but nevertheless a walk enjoyed by all and well worth the effort, especially as the weather was fine. Moreover, it turned out to be the last NPA walk before the August to October COVID-19 lockdown in the ACT.

Philip Gatenby



Regenerating Eucalypts. Photo by Jan Gatenby
Epacris impressa. Photos by Philip Gatenby

Banksia spinulosa

Tall Everlasting Daisy





Mount Kelly circuit

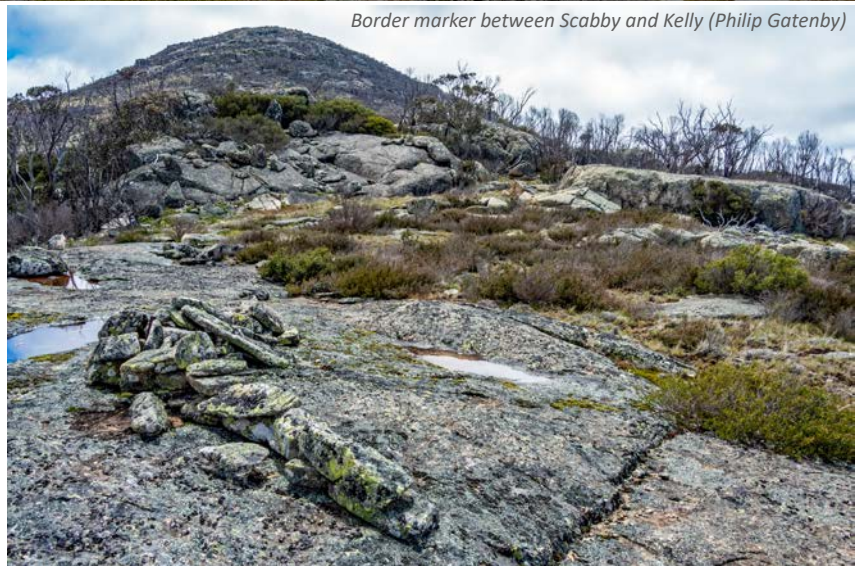
Burnt landscape from Mount Kelly (Jan Gatenby)

Date: 27–30 November 2021

Participants: Philip Gatenby (leader), Garry Boxsell, Melinda Brouwer, Jan Gatenby, Dave Kelly, Jacqui Rosier

Weather: Showers, then cool and cloudy, then sunny and warm.

Heavy rain in the days before the walk resulted in closure of the road into Yankee Hat car park, the planned starting point, so the walk started at a locked gate about 400 m along Old Boboyan Road from its junction with Boboyan Road. This meant having to wade swiftly flowing Hospital Creek where it crosses the road. Garry's quick reflexes prevented Melinda floating downstream.



Border marker between Scabby and Kelly (Philip Gatenby)

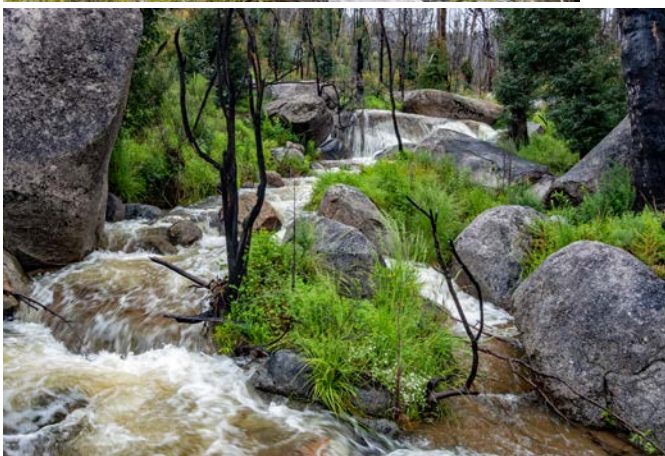


We slogged north-west over the waterlogged grassland of Gudgenby Valley, with low cloud obscuring nearby peaks, to the junction of Middle Creek and its major unnamed tributary which we followed up to Bogong Gap, our planned destination. Thoughts of a side trip up cloud-shrouded Mount Burbidge remained just that, thus changing the day's destination to the flats below Mount Kelly on the headwaters of Sams Creek, accessible via a saddle slightly higher than Bogong Gap located about

Left: Crossing Sams Creek (Jan Gatenby)

Left below: Creek from Bogong Gap (Philip Gatenby)

Scabby Tarn (Jan Gatenby)





Atop Mount Kelly (Jan Gatenby)
 Left: Section of old fire trail (Philip Gatenby)
 Below: Rock formation, Gudgenby saddle (Jan Gatenby)

700 m south-east of Kelly. Below the saddle, as we crossed the flats, two Latham's Snipe were flushed out of the grass near the first side creek we came to.

We spent two nights camped at Sams Creek, with a frost on the second morning. On the intervening day we crossed the flats and explored the ridge between mounts Scabby and Kelly, admiring the now full Scabby Tarn and the displays of wildflowers, spotting border markers but saddened by the view of a badly burnt landscape from Kelly's top. The floral display included fields of *Stackhousia monogyna*, a variety of orchids, *Acacia alpina* high up between rock slabs and much more.

A fire trail once ran north-east from Old Boboyan Road, up Naas Creek over the Boboyan Divide into NSW, then beside Sams Creek and on to the saddle south-east of Mount Kelly. Some topo maps show it continued down to Rotten Swamp but I have not seen evidence of this in



Gudgenby saddle (Jan Gatenby)

almost 40 years of walking in the area. Day 3's plan was to follow this trail until it reached Naas Creek then climb to the saddle south-east of Mount Gudgenby. Surprisingly, the old fire trail, which can't have had a vehicle on for almost 20 years, was possible to follow in places, particularly where its route had been cut into a slope by bulldozer. It seemed easier to follow than before the 2020 bushfire, probably because the flames had burnt off the regenerating shrubbery. Where it crossed grassy frost hollows there was no sign. The first clearing downstream of the flats below Kelly once had a stockyard. A few pieces of wire, tin cans, a couple of posts and tree stumps are all that remain. A large Black Snake was unimpressed by our arrival.

The old fire trail forded Sams Creek before climbing the Boboyan Divide to enter the ACT. Often a wet crossing in normal times, it was likely to be difficult with the volume of water in the creek. Fortunately, upstream of the crossing a large, fallen tree had bridged the creek. It even had a handrail from overhead branches. Once over the divide (where more border markers were seen) we left the trail and climbed to the saddle below Mount Gudgenby. Tent sites in the saddle were at a premium. Flat ground is scarce and much of it was waterlogged. Nearby granite boulders south-east of the saddle are well worth a visit.

The weather improved every day; Day 4 was sunny and warm. Leaving most of our gear at camp, we climbed Mount Gudgenby, 400 m above the saddle. On a clear day the view from the summit is impressive in all directions. The summit cairn is also a great place for skinks when the sun is out. Another highlight of a visit to the top of Gudgenby is an exploration of the narrow passages through a pile of large boulders 200 m to the north of the trig.

Back at camp, packed up, the start of the footpad which linked the saddle to the grasslands of Gudgenby Valley was easily



Diuris sulphurea, Tiger Orchid (Philip Gatenby)



Mountain Cap Orchid (Jan Gatenby)



Stackhousia monogyna, Creamy Candles (Philip Gatenby)



Veronica gracilis, Slender Speedwell (Philip Gatenby)



Solanum (Philip Gatenby)

found but the rest of the pad had mostly disappeared under fallen logs and post-fire regrowth. As expected, the grasslands were still boggy but the water level at the Hospital Creek ford was lower and the crossing, though still slippery, was easier. Eastern Greys and Red-necked Wallabies were abundant. The locked gate near Boboyan Road was now open.

Namadgi's south-west corner, combined with the Scabby Range Nature Reserve, offers some of the best and most remote walking in the national park. Our trip was 4 days but could easily have been extended to take in more of the area's spectacular peaks.

Philip Gatenby

Climbing Gudgenby (Jan Gatenby)

Right: Gudgenby summit (Philip Gatenby)



North from Gudgenby summit (Philip Gatenby)



Guided nature walk: wildflowers of the ACT border

Date: 14 November 2021

Participants: Isobel Crawford – Rod Griffiths (co-leaders), John Brickhill, Don Fletcher, Linda Johnston, Mike K, Alan Laird, Jeff Mitchell, Kerry Moir, Jaime Ratcliffe, Brian Slee, Peter Wilson, + one other

Weather: As predicted, suitable for well rugged-up walking: cool/cold, windy but rain-free.

This 'Border Walk' is an easy 5 km return along Old Tuggeranong Road – south and east from the Monaro Highway (at Delta Force Paintball) to the railway easement on the ACT–NSW border, and then a bit further to the derelict Tuggeranong railway siding. Here we had morning tea and enjoyed views to Mounts Campbell, Rob Roy and Tennent and the ranges beyond.

The land on the western and southern side of the road is now Melrose Nature Reserve, or, closer to the border, the remaining lands of the 'Melrose Valley' property. On the eastern and northern side it is Tuggeranong Pines, and the Melrose Travelling Stock Route, managed as part of the Reserve.

One of the most widespread native species seen was Common Bogsedge (*Schoenus apogon*), more often misleadingly named Common Bog-rush. This lovely little dark-flowered annual sedge was doing extremely well in such a wet season.

As well as a surprisingly rich native flora, planted Australian and non-Australian plants (and their offspring) are a feature of this walk, courtesy of earlier residents of Melrose Valley. There are many wattle species which do not occur naturally in the ACT, a melaleuca which has seeded generously in the wet areas, plus the rather lovely Pink Pavonia (*Pavonia hastate*) which also appears to be spreading unbidden.

The Travelling Stock Route (TSR) is interesting: rather than being grassland or grassy woodland, as are many TSRs, it is dominated by Common Fringe Myrtle (*Calytrix tetragona*) and other shrub species that suggest poor soils and over-clearing. Many thanks to Linda for preparing a plant list: please contact Isobel if you would like a copy.

As well taking in the great botanic diversity of the area, the walk also covered some of its history. From the establishment of the Tuggeranong railway siding in 1887 for the

loading of stock onto the soon to be completed Queanbeyan to Cooma railway, to the tough times of the railway workers building the railway and their camp further along on the massive horseshoe bend of the railway and eventual ACT–NSW border. And in the early 1900s, there were the political intrigues that saw the NSW Government refuse to hand over Queanbeyan and the railway line to the proposed Federal Capital Territory, an action which radically changed the shape of the Territory.

The surveying of the border is a story in its own right, from conflicts with disgruntled landowners to the skill in crafting the many markers needed to trace the route of the border.

All in all, the walk had so many different aspects and was a great way of spending a Sunday morning.

Isobel Crawford (with Rod Griffiths)



Above: Tuggeranong siding

Below: Rod explaining border marker siting



Pale Wedgepea (*Gompholobium huegelii*)

Common Fringe Myrtle

Linda, Isobel, Jeff



Eucalyptus spp.

*how beautiful
is the breeze that waves
the leaves
of eucalypts ...
that cools the sweat of a walker*

I tear off a leaf or two whenever I pass a gum tree and have a sniff, and that's almost every day of my life. When I retired I thought I would spend the rest of my days learning the 900 or so species of eucalypt, and on a few walks I carried a guidebook; but I didn't keep it up. I suppose I know a dozen or so species, like the yellow box *Eucalyptus melliodora* that I embrace when walking the Red Hill ridge.

*centuries
curve the whorled bark
of yellow box –
I stand and stare
and share one minute*

And I know snow gums. I remember camping in the snow up near Cesjacks Hut one year, under an ancient snow gum. How I got to love that tree even though it occasionally shook its snow over my tent. How cold it was up there: twelve hours in the sack, my love affair with *Eucalyptus pauciflora*.

*deep night
in silent mountains ...
I wake
to gentle sunlight
on branches of a snow gum*

At home I wake each morning and through the bedroom window I see the tall white brittle gum *Eucalyptus mannifera* over the back fence. Often the rising sun kisses its topmost branches, gradually filling the whole tree with sunlight, irradiating the new day that has just begun with an act of love.

*my head
on your shoulder
afterwards
opening my eyes
sunlight and brittle gum*

There's a gap next door where the great ribbon gum, *Eucalyptus viminalis*, stood. It was our view from the front verandah; and its twigs started our log fires for forty years. The neighbours had it cut down; it's dangerous they said, might drop a branch. When the tree fellers came I couldn't bear to stay around. I walked down to the village and sat in a café till the felling was finished.

*ribbon gum
attacked by chainsaws
I leave the scene
and dull the pain
with tea and cake and poetry*

Scrambling on the Ridge of Stone. Grey granite boulders tinged with orange sunlight. I drop down off a tor into that wild forest of silver gums and gold flowering pea. Scribbly gums, *Eucalyptus rossi*. Listening to wind in the trees and the song of unseen birds: whistlers, warblers, screechers.

*scribbly gum
growing out of solid granite
for two hundred years
pushing our roots down
into a hard land*

Speckled light and leaf litter on the rainforest track. We pilgrims stop for lunch beside an immense flooded gum. After my sandwich I lie down on the forest floor with the ticks and leeches. Breathing in green, breathing in oxygen from the forest beings. Their generosity.

*up there
its branches trace the sky ...
breathing in
a flooded gum
*Eucalyptus grandis**

I crave silence but the meditation hall seems full of chatter. I crave the inner world, dark though it may be. This morning's teaching is about moving between the inner and the outer. The words flow over me. It's stuffy in here. I nod off, and someone nudges me. I go outside where it's cold and grey. A stand of argyle apples, *Eucalyptus cinerea*, glows with its distinctive blue-grey lustre. The world glows for me.

*this street
lined with argyle apples ...
such scruffy trees
in a suburb
of immaculate McMansions*

A time to plant. A row of pots. We look for the healthiest, most vibrant seedlings. Refreshing dark green juvenile leaves. What are these? They turn out to be apple box (*Eucalyptus bridgesiana*), a local species. Rae and I take a tray of a dozen or so. We plant them up on Stirling Ridge. It's a work party of the 'Friends of Grassland' restoring a precious patch of woodland.

*dig the hole
and plant the seedling ...
apple box ...
tamp the earth and water in
will it grow 300 years?*

After dinner I walk out into the dusty paddock with my sleeping bag. Beside the tree (*Eucalyptus blakelyii*) I watch the moon set. Brightly jewelled Scorpio is overhead. The Milky Way and all its darkness. Later comes the glow of dawn. I close my eyes and when I wake it's grey morning. Smoke haze fills the valley and the sun is trying to break through above the wooded hill. I roll up the swag and wander in to the homestead for a shower and breakfast, and a day of poetry.

*remnant ...
standing alone
in the paddock
for two hundred years ...
*Blakely's red gum**

Gerry Jacobson

PARKWATCH

Warragamba Dam assessment 'inadequate'

The Aboriginal heritage report for a controversial \$1 billion-plus proposal by the NSW Government to raise the wall of Warragamba Dam was 'manifestly inadequate', according to a scathing report from respected Sydney archaeologists. A submission by consultancy firm Coast History and Heritage was highly critical of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report (ACHAR), compiled by Niche Environment and Heritage for the state government's environmental impact statement.

'Our strong view is that the ACHAR for the Warragamba Dam Raising does not meet the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements and is manifestly inadequate to allow the minister to make an informed decision about the project in relation to Aboriginal heritage,' the report's authors, Paul Irish and Fenella Atkinson, said.

The report was conducted on behalf of Gundungurra traditional custodian Kazan Brown, who has long opposed the controversial plan to raise the dam wall by 14 metres to protect downstream communities from flooding.

www.smh.com.au 13 January 2022

Win for endangered numbat

A new national park has been created in the heart of Western Australia's wheatbelt, providing greater security for the future of some of the state's most endangered animals. The woodland near Narrogin will now be classified as a national park.

The Dryandra Woodland is the natural home of numbats, woylies and Western Quolls, and is the largest remnant of the original vegetation before it was cleared for broadacre farming. Approximately 15,000 hectares of the Wandoo and Powderbark Eucalypt woodlands will be given greater levels of conservation programs, affording the unique mammals, birds and reptiles that call Dryandra home greater protection from cats and foxes.

<https://ab.co/3o1780U>

Coastal walk trail proposed for WA national park

The WA Department of Environment and Conservation proposes to build and maintain a 45 km coastal walk trail from Point Ann to Hamersley Inlet, through the Wilderness Management Zone of the Fitzgerald River National Park. The proposal includes camping facilities such as huts, water collection facilities and toilets along the trail, and vehicle access tracks to allow maintenance and emergency response.

<https://bit.ly/35khthU>

Near-extinct orchid crop discovered in Riverina

Rangers have discovered a secret meadow of near-extinct native orchids on a travelling stock reserve in the Riverina. The extremely rare Oaklands Donkey Orchid comes from the genus *Diuris*, known for its petals that poke up like donkey ears. Until recently, there were just 1,000 Oaklands Donkey Orchids remaining, their survival threatened by livestock grazing, rabbits and invasive weeds. Murray Local Land Services officers had been searching for a reintroduction site for the endangered bloom when they discovered a hidden crop.

Officers have fenced off the meadow to protect the orchids from grazing stock. It is just a small patch – 3 hectares of a 150-hectare reserve – but it could determine the survival of this highly endangered plant.

<https://ab.co/35oKyZz>

'World-class' alpine work proposed

The Snowies Alpine Walk project proposes a world-class, multi-day walk across the alpine roof of Australia in Kosciuszko National Park in Monero Ngarigo Country. It reflects the growing visitor demand for nature-based walking experiences in NSW and worldwide. The project will deliver an alpine 3 night – 4 day, class 4, self-guided or guided walk that links the villages of Guthega, Charlotte Pass, Perisher and Lake Crackenback, and includes reaching the summit of Mount Kosciuszko.

The work includes 27 kilometres of new walking track and realignment of existing tracks to protect threatened alpine grasses. Walkers can choose to do any section of the track as single-day walks or combine sections for 2 to 4 day walks.

<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/>

Feral deer project gathers data

Progress continues to be made in feral deer pest control in Kosciuszko National Park and adjacent private land. The feral deer management project, formed in 2019, has secure funds till 2027. The first phase will focus on gathering and analysing data.

The project team has set up more than 100 remote cameras and fitted GPS collars to some deer to understand the why, how and where behind fresh feral deer appearing in what will be a newly cleared project area. The camera footage will be used to show what the deer prefer to eat and where and when they browse. The GPS collars and camera data will help understand how feral deer move through the landscape. The knowledge will help develop new management options.

<https://bit.ly/3u0FtkU>

Pillar of VNPA retiring after 20 years

Phil Ingamells, an accomplished conservation advocate with skills and knowledge honed over the past two decades at the VNPA, is retiring. VNPA executive director Matt Ruchel described Phil as a thoughtful and persuasive writer and eloquent speaker who has played an important role in protecting Victoria's natural places and national parks. Some of the highlights of his time with VNPA include the hard-fought battles to remove cattle grazing from the Alpine National Park and, more recently, to control feral horses there.

Park Watch (VNPA), No. 287 (December 2021)

Popular camping spot reopens

Popular Bonnie Vale campground at Royal National Park has reopened as part of the largest-ever visitor infrastructure program rollout in NSW national parks. NSW Environment Minister James Griffin said the \$2.5 million project will ensure it remains one of Sydney's favourite parks for generations to come. Bonnie Vale is the gateway to southern Sydney's natural treasures, from the scenic Royal Coast Track to the spectacular Aboriginal engravings at Jibbon headland and the jewelled waters of Port Hacking's Simpsons Bay.

<https://bit.ly/3g1AMPd>

Feral horse plan welcomed

VNPA has congratulated Parks Victoria on its recently released final *Protection of the Alpine National Park: Feral Horse Action Plan*. VNPA said the plan has real integrity and it congratulated the Victorian Environment Minister for her unwavering support for it. VNPA also congratulated its members for their crucial support for the long campaign and said all that was needed now was to get the NSW Government to control horses over the border.

The plan is the result of many decades of scientific study, and involved years of consultation with the broad community, brumby support groups, cattlemen, animal welfare experts, Aboriginal communities, and ecologists. Parks Victoria also had to defend its plan before the Supreme and Federal courts.

Park Watch (VNPA), No. 287 (December 2021)

NPWS to improve views from the Pinnacles

Construction of two new viewing platforms at the striking Pinnacles sand cliffs in Ben Boyd National Park has started, as part of the biggest infrastructure investment in NSW national parks' history. The \$250,000 project will improve the popular Pinnacles loop walking track and give visitors much better views of the 65 million-year-old white sand and red gravel cliffs.

The project is part of the biggest infrastructure investment in NSW national parks' history, delivering \$450 million of priority works that benefit the community and boost nature-based tourism across the state. While works continue over summer, the Pinnacles loop walking track will be closed. The improved track and new viewing platforms are expected to be open by mid 2022.

<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/news/>

Nationally significant wetlands added to national park estate

A stunning 33,000 hectare property featuring nationally significant wetlands and habitat for up to 40 threatened species will be added to the NSW national park estate. The property features two nationally important wetlands – Lake Wombah, which straddles the NSW–Queensland border, and over 7,000 hectares of the Yantabulla Swamp.

In response to the October 2021 announcement by the NSW Government that it would rebuild Four Mile Hut, burnt down in the 2019-20 bushfires, a jacket was created for *The Life of a Mountain Hut* by Klaus Hueneke (Tabletop Press, 2020 –

available for purchase online), a book detailing the history of the hut right up to its destruction. The jacket (photo supplied by author) features a magnificent mid-winter shot of the hut, located south of Kiandra, taken by Alan Levy in 2016 and will accompany future sales of the book. See *NPA Bulletin* March 2021 for book review.



Zoe, Ben and Klaus, photo Abi

Klaus has been exploring the Kosciusko high country on skis and on foot with a camera and a pen since the 1960s. This has resulted in a dozen books about the area's natural and cultural history as well as unique character. His major work, *Huts of the High Country*, published in 1982, has found more than 14,000 owners.

Of all the eighty huts that are still left, Four Mile became the apple of his eye. Rather than a chronological history in the third person, Klaus has made the hut the speaker and observer of all the things that have happened to her. Major events include her birth in 1937, the passing of thousands of sheep, battles between dingoes and wombats and several hut restorations. Visitors have included amateur lovers, mountain poets, singers of renown, keen skiers, lost bush-walkers, wayward robbers, dingo trappers and people seeking the tranquility of the hills. One visitor, impressed by the Spartan life style and philosophy of Bob Hughes, the hut's builder, compared him to Henry Thoreau, the American philosopher. The story finishes with the catastrophic fires of 2019/20 and the huts spirited conviction that she will be rebuilt.

Jacket photo: Alan Levy
People in photo: Adam Lilley, Trish Woods, Karel Pelikan
Jacket Layout: Luci Caldwell



Inside Four Mile Hut, 2019, author photo

Where does the social life of Australia's high country occur? Ski-tourers and alpine walkers, striving for shelter and ahead of dusk or bad weather, can be profoundly un-chatty; and tents are mostly poor places for conversation. It is inside the high country's huts that society flourishes. (I think Klaus must have got most of his conversations off a fly on a hut's rafters.)

As a photographer, he knows that the narrowest aperture can give the greatest depth of field; and he has brilliantly chosen the narrow peephole of a single hut – ironically, one that burnt down in 2020 before he had completed its story – and must surely be re-built now to sample, across the decades, the vast saga of mountain folk and mountain stories.

A triumph!
Mark O'Connor, poet, author of *Tilting at Snowgums*

letop Press Online Store:
letoppressbooks.com



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Feral horses, Wallaces Creek FireTrail, KNP, growing fat in the good 2022 season. Photo by Mike Bremers

The property features a diversity of ecosystems – from gidgee country and stony mulga rises through to Mitchell Grass grasslands, Blackbox and Coolibah-lined creek systems and complex lignum swamps. Located in the traditional Paroo River country of the Budjiti and Barkandji People and 150 km north of Bourke, the property also contains extensive Aboriginal cultural heritage.

<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/news/>

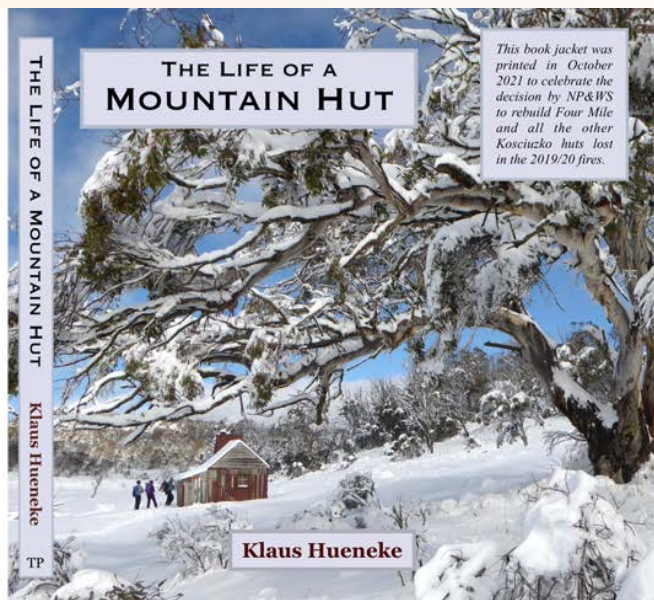
New tracks make Malabar to Maroubra magic

New walking tracks between Malabar and Maroubra beaches in Malabar Headland National Park in Sydney's east are now completed. The beaches are now linked by a formal walking track across the headland, following a \$3.5 million investment to improve public safety and enjoyment of the new national park.

The national park is of great importance to the local community, greater Sydney and beyond, with exceptional cultural and natural heritage values, including rich Aboriginal cultural heritage and important World War II heritage items. It was established following transfer from the Commonwealth to the National Parks and Wildlife Service in 2016 and a key objective was building a walking track on the eastern edge of the park to improve public access.

<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/news/>

Compiled by Hazel Rath, condensed by Allan Sharp



This book jacket was printed in October 2021 to celebrate the decision by NP&WS to rebuild Four Mile and all the other Kosciusko huts lost in the 2019/20 fires.

THE LIFE OF A MOUNTAIN HUT

THE LIFE OF A MOUNTAIN HUT
Klaus Hueneke

Klaus Hueneke



NPA bulletin board

Inspired by nature: Exhibition of artworks at Namadgi Visitor Centre (NVC)

Until 6 April

A number of NPA members are skilled in the arts and crafts and regularly visit various parts of Namadgi to capture the richness and beauty of its textures, colours and vistas. The NVC (Naas Road, south of Tharwa) is currently hosting a display of some of their fine paintings, photos and basket work.

Call into the NVC and check it out!



Left: Pink heath
Below: Pink moth.
Photos by Rupert Barnett



Nominations for Life Membership now open

The committee is again calling for nominations for Honorary Life Membership. If a member has done something very special for our association and is worthy of this recognition, please send a confidential nomination to Secretary Sonja Lenz by mid-April (signed by yourself and another member who seconds the nomination).

Further information on what to put into the written nomination can be found on the NPA website or by contacting Kevin McCue on 6251 1291 or email mccue.kevin@gmail.com.

NPA ACT welcomes the following new members:

- Sam Amini
- Samantha Shi
- Margarita Goumas
- Janice Trafford
- Angela & Marita Hills
- Jayne Roberts
- Madeleine Johnson-Woodhouse
- Brooke Zuidema
- Peter Otteson
- Rosalind Webb
- Lea & Kevin Allan & Symphony Anderson
- Christopher Anderson & Alice Tudehope

We look forward to seeing you at NPA activities.

ANU Associate Professor of Sociology, Dr Gavin Smith, describes himself as a generalist sociologist and snake ecologist. He is currently researching the ecology and behaviour of urban-adapted Eastern Brown Snakes in Canberra.

Hear his unique take on the subject at NPA's general meeting on **Thursday, 17 March.**



General meetings

Third Thursday of the month,
7:30 pm, Uniting Church hall, 56 Scrivener Street, O'Connor

It is not known yet if meetings will be held face-to-face or by Zoom but it is hoped to resume meeting face-to-face when indoor space and mask restrictions are eased. Please refer to *Burning Issues* or the NPA website closer to the date.

Thursday 17 March

The secret life of Eastern Brown Snakes

Gavin Smith

Associate Professor, ANU

Professor Smith will share some findings about the fascinating behaviours and habitats of the ACT's beautiful Eastern Brown Snakes. See notice p. 31.

Thursday 21 April

Climate change and environmental issues in the ACT – an Opposition perspective

Elizabeth Lee MLA

Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Minister for Climate Action

Leanne Castley MLA

Shadow Minister for Environment and Heritage

Members of the Opposition will share their views on environmental and climate issues in the ACT and on the 2021 outcomes of COP 26 in Glasgow.

Thursday 19 May

Namadgi National Park: fire recovery update

Brett McNamara

Manager, Namadgi National Park

Brett will update us about progress with Namadgi's recovery from the 2020 fires.

More for your calendar	March	April	May	June
Committee meetings	Tuesday 1 st	Tuesday 5 th	Tuesday 3 rd	Tuesday 7 th

National Parks Association of the ACT Incorporated (Inaugurated 1960)

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we live, learn and work, and pay our respects to the First Nations Peoples and their Elders, past, present and emerging.

Aims and objectives of the Association

- Promotion of national parks and of measures for the protection of fauna and flora, scenery, natural features and cultural heritage 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 and cultural heritage by organised field outings, meetings or any other means.
- Cooperation with organisations and persons having similar interests and objectives.
- Promotion of, and education for, conservation, and the planning of landuse to achieve conservation.

Office-bearers

President	Esther Gallant
Vice President	Rosemary Hollow
Secretary	Sonja Lenz
Treasurer	Jan Gatenby

Committee members

Cynthia Burton (Membership liaison)
 Chris Emery
 Rod Griffiths (Immediate Past President)
 Debbie Worner (Minutes Secretary)

Mike Bremers
 Kevin McCue
 Allan Sharp

Conveners

Bulletin Working Group
Cultural Subcommittee
Environment Subcommittee
Outings Subcommittee
Publications Subcommittee
Promotion and Outreach Subcommittee
Work Party Co-ordinator

Allan Sharp
 Rosemary Hollow
 Rod Griffiths
 Mike Bremers
 Kevin McCue
 Allan Sharp
 Martin Chalk

Membership subscription rates (1 July to 30 June)

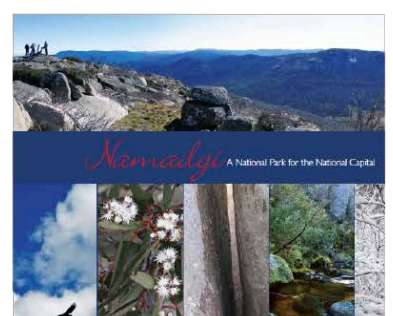
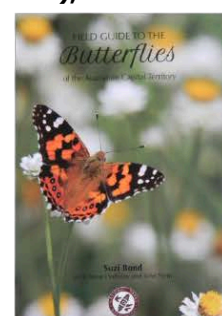
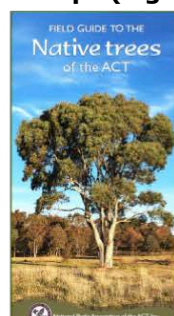
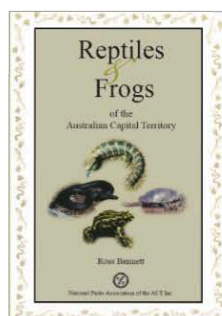
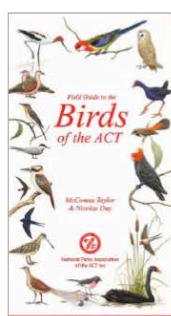
The subscription rate is \$22, which includes a digital copy of our *Bulletin*.

If you want to receive a printed copy of the *Bulletin*, the subscription rates are:

Household membership \$44 Single members \$38.50
 Corporate membership \$33 Full-time student/Pensioner \$22

Note: All the above subscription categories reduce to \$11 if a donation of \$100 or more is made.

NPA books are available from some bookshops (e.g. ANBG), or contact the association office.





For information on NPA ACT activities, please visit our
website: <http://www.npaact.org.au> and follow us:
Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/npa_act/
Twitter: <https://twitter.com/Lovenature321>
Facebook: www.facebook.com/NationalParksAssociationOfTheACT

