



NPA Bulletin



- **Snowies Alpine Walk begins taking shape**
- **Wildbark opens in Throsby**
- **Netflix's *Kangaroo Valley* filmed in familiar territory**
- **Sub-Antarctic islands of New Zealand and Australia**
- **Behind the writing of *Native Bees***

conservation education protection

March 2023 – Volume 60 – Number 1

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The **NPA Bulletin** is published quarterly in print and an extended online version to provide members with news on environmental and heritage conservation, education and protection, particularly as bearing on the ACT and adjacent regions.

Its aim is to report on NPA Committee and subcommittee deliberations and decisions; NPA events; provide a forum for members and invited guests on matters of interest and concern to NPA ACT; and fulfil an educational role on conservation and outdoor recreation issues. We accept paid advertising, where appropriate.

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. The editor retains the right of final decision on content and presentation.

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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Disclaimer:
Articles by contributors may not necessarily reflect association opinion or objectives

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Cover photos

Front cover: *Mount Twynam from Guthrie Ridge*. By Mike Bremers (see p. 27)

Back cover:

Top and bottom lines: *Native bees* (see p. 7 for captions)

Middle line: *Creamy Candles* (*Stackhousia monogyna*). By Eleanor Cotterell

From the President

Greetings everyone

By the time you read this in March the weather might have cooled down. I hope you all had a happy and safe summer. I enjoyed following our Facebook and Instagram pages, with great images and reports on walks near and far, including the butterfly walk in the Botanic Gardens, always a popular January activity. Some members escaped to the cool mountain air with a day trip to Guthrie Ridge near Guthega and had a great display of alpine flowers. Closer to home, a walk exploring Molonglo Gorge had very positive feedback on social media.

Changes are happening. We have a new venue for NPA's monthly general meetings, at Weston Creek Uniting Church. Our new meeting place is accessible by public transport, is light and welcoming, and has good parking. The church is also popular with other clubs, including Canberra Bushwalking Club, and has Wi-Fi too. We hope the new venue will encourage more members to attend meetings. They are a chance to share stories, meet the committee and hear interesting and engaging speakers.

NPA ACT now has its own email address, for use by the office, committee members and activity organisers. It means that not only can recipients readily identify emails coming from NPA ACT, but also that we can store all correspondence on a shared drive, which is important for record-keeping and archives.

My usual summer activity of walking in Kosciuszko did not happen this year. I had a major melanoma removed from my left shin, so



President, Rosemary Hollow, Rebecca Vassarotti MLA and Immediate Past President, Esther Gallant, at NPA Christmas party

no walking boots for a few months. I am writing about this to remind everyone not just about the importance of sunscreen and hats all year round, but to get your skin checked regularly. I would not have identified this spot as a melanoma; just lucky to have a good skin specialist. If you have been thinking about a skin check, do it now.

We are delighted to have another new committee member, Maisie Walker Stelling, who was last year's NPA-supported honours student at ANU's Fenner School. We are also pleased to welcome Marie Santsingh as the new *Burning Issues* editor (see p. 34).

And huge thanks to our *Bulletin* editors, designers, support team and contributors. This lovely *Bulletin* is a result of their hard work, which we all much appreciate.

Rosemary Hollow



View west from Sammys Hill. Photo by Brian Slee . All other photos by Sabine Friedrich

NPA Christmas party

A well-attended gathering was held on 4 December 2022 at newly opened Wildbark, the gateway visitor centre to Mulligan's Flat Woodland Sanctuary, Throsby. Guests included MLAs Shane Rattenbury and Rebecca Vassarotti. The lunchtime gathering was preceded by a delightful 3 hour morning walk by 11 members, led by Rod Griffiths, beyond the feral-proof fence to Inglewood homestead ruins and Sammys Hill.

Don Fletcher, Hugh Coppel

John Brickhill, Mike Bremers

Alison Russell-French, Shane Rattenbury MLA, Peter Ottesen





Canberra's newest nature-based learning centre opens

Wildbark, the new gateway to Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary, aims to offer something for everyone, reports Allan Sharp

Canberra's newest nature-based learning centre, Wildbark, officially opened in late 2022. A joint effort of the Woodlands and Wetlands Trust (WWT), the ACT Government, Odonata Foundation and the Australian National University, Wildbark will add another dimension to the woodland experience offered by the 1,300 ha sanctuary located on Canberra's northern fringe.

WWT chief executive, Dr Jason Cummings, is enthusiastic about the potential of the \$5m centre to attract visitors and provide them with the opportunity to develop a greater understanding and appreciation of the critically endangered woodlands.

'We want the whole community to come and experience the sanctuary through Wildbark,' he said. 'Our particular focus will be on education and attracting school groups. Prior to COVID, 170,000 children from around Australia came to Canberra to visit Parliament House and the Museum of Australian Democracy. We want Wildbark to be on that itinerary.'



Wildbark's sponsor board, which recognises contributors. Photo by Sabine Friedrich

Through a menu of specific activities, Wildbark also aims to attract tourists and the corporate sector to the centre and the sanctuary, which consists of the initial area of 480 ha of protected Box-Gum Grassy Woodland and an 800 ha expansion area.

Wildbark occupies a 1 ha site at the entrance to the expansion area. Built of locally sourced sustainable materials and rammed-earth walls, the centre has exhibition spaces for

environmental workshops and other events, a nature play area for children, and display pens where visitors will be able to interact with endangered native animals.

'The idea is to give visitors the opportunity to learn about our conservation initiatives and to inspire them to care more about the environment'

The area around the centre is being planted with native grasses and trees and features sculptures and examples of local Aboriginal culture.

'We're about to release our flagship species, bettongs, into the expansion area, and then Eastern Quolls. Bush-stone Curlews are already there, and in the pipeline – as funds, animal sources, and operational priorities permit – Australian Bustards, koalas, Rosenberg's Goannas, possibly Lace Monitors, Southern Brown Bandicoots and Brushtail Phascogales.'

The list of candidate species to be reintroduced is long and includes several pilot species such as the Brown Tree Creeper and the Spotted Tail Quoll that were reintroduced earlier but did not adapt as well as hoped. 'They

were all here once but, unfortunately, were wiped out by foxes,' Jason said. However, once foxes are taken out of the environment not only do threatened species recover but other wildlife as well, including Sugar Gliders, echidnas and Brushtail Possums.

'This is emblematic of the impact foxes are having on the broader landscape,' Jason said, 'so it's a priority to get some predation back into the sanctuary – for example, by introducing more Spotted Tail Quolls to keep the possum population in check.'

'We're really trying to rebuild an ecosystem, which is not easy, and that includes predation of all other species.'

'It's a bit like when a shark attacks, everyone is against it. But conservation says we need them to maintain healthy populations. So, we need animals like the Spotted Tail Quoll in the sanctuary to keep the animal population – possums in particular – healthy.'

'Once, an old or injured possum, for example, would have been taken out by a quoll. So, it's a matter of trying to make all the species in the sanctuary predator-savvy, because, ultimately, we want them to thrive outside the sanctuary fence,' he said.

There are also plans to involve the traditional custodians, the Ngunnawal people, in the management of the sanctuary more. A local Ngunnawal knowledge holder, Richie Allen, already leads groups around the sanctuary and demonstrates traditional practices like cutting coolamons from trees or explaining cool climate burns and kangaroo harvesting.

'We'd love to see more of that,' Jason said, 'but equally it's about providing a canvas and opportunities for the Ngunnawal and other Aboriginal people to come here and do what they want to do. It's a reconnection of the Ngunnawal people with the sanctuary and the land more broadly.'

'This is a journey we're all on, and part of what we can do at Wildbark. That includes everything from opportunities for Aboriginal people to sell their artwork, work in the café or lead tours – we want a pathway for Aboriginal people to connect better to country.'

Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group in 2022



Top: Bruce Boreham demonstrates Fiskars weeder, December. Photo by Brian Slee

It will not be surprising to *Bulletin* readers that 2022 was another frustrating year for Gudgenby Bushies, with several of its work parties cancelled or rescheduled due to wet weather. For much of the year, access to the more remote parts of Gudgenby Valley and the regeneration area was difficult or impossible.

As a consequence, we were restricted to working at a couple of sites with reasonable access.

We were able to hold eight work parties and our activities concentrated on controlling woody weeds – primarily briar, hawthorn and blackberry. We also dismantled a damaged enclosure in the vicinity of Yankee Hat carpark, one of number of such structures established in the early days of the project but now redundant. In July, when conditions were unsuitable in the valley, we assisted Namadgi staff with weed removal in the Red Gum enclosure at Tharwa. Fortunately, the weather was favourable in December when 10 members enjoyed a convivial Christmas celebration at Gudgenby Cottage. We were joined by ranger Mark Elford plus two park visitors who happened to be passing by!

A highlight was receiving the ACT Government Quiet Achievers Award at the 2021 ACT Landcare Awards held in March 2022 (*NPA Bulletin*, June 2022). The award is a much appreciated recognition of not only our efforts since 1998 but also of those NPA members who pushed so hard for removal of the former Boboyan Pines plantation and for the community to be involved in this mammoth project.



Ian Kershaw, Filomena Barzi at Christmas party. Photo by Brian Slee

Doug Brown, President

Below: February 2022 work party. Photo by Kevin McCue



Lunch beside Gudgenby River, September. Photo by Brian Slee



NPA people

Message from Margaret

Hello NPAers. Though I have been a NPA member, frequent bushwalker and sometimes walk leader for more than 20 years, most of you have not seen me for some time. That is because in May 2022, when I was crossing a street in Civic (with a green walk signal), I was hit by a car. The car was moving slowly and when I hit the ground, I suffered injuries to my knees and hips, and bruising to my hands and wrists. Those were not terribly serious and I eventually recovered from them. Unfortunately, though, after knocking me to the ground, the car paused and then resumed moving forward and drove right over my right ankle. This resulted in far more serious injuries requiring surgery twice. The surgeon told me that I almost lost my ankle and foot (i.e. almost became an amputee), but did not. I still have two feet!

Since my second operation my recovery has been coming along well. I did my first NPA outing on 8 January, an easy 10.5 km walk around North Canberra (with lunch in Braddon). It was good to take part after so long away. I will be unable to do many other walks for quite a while. At this stage my limit is about 12 km and I have difficulty with uneven ground and steep descents. I have been advised that I am unlikely to get any more movement back in my ankle than I have now. I will learn to live with it and work towards being able to do the things I want to do. I have many



Margaret Power. Photo supplied

weeks of physiotherapy to go. Hopefully, by later this year I will again be an active NPA bushwalker. I look forward to seeing some of you on the tracks.

Margaret Power

NPA Science

Goanna tracking skills training

NPA supports citizen science research on Rosenberg's Goanna. One of the few remaining strongholds of this threatened species is in parts of the ACT.

Three skills-familiarisation sessions were held at Namadji Visitor Centre and its surrounds on consecutive Sundays in November 2022 as part of the NPA Goanna Project, which is citizen science research into the *Conservation Biology of Rosenberg's Monitor in the ACT Region*, run entirely by volunteers. The aim was to refresh old skills and introduce new volunteers to the work required, particularly what would be needed for the camera 'trapping' survey now underway at Ainslie-Majura (which will be the subject of a future article). I led the 10 hours of training entailed.

Each session involved an indoor component followed by a field exercise in small teams. Luckily it rained only during the indoor components. Topics covered were: radio-tracking Rosenberg's Goannas; camera trapping; and navigation using apps on smart phones. Eighteen volunteers participated, including some new NPA members, for an average of two sessions each. This does not include two Tree Goannas and one Rosenberg's Goanna which remained motionless in the room and a wet Red-necked Wallaby which gazed enviously into the room during one downpour (see photos).

Don Fletcher



Rosenberg's Goanna model. All photos by Cynthia Burton unless indicated otherwise



Craig and Hamish following clues.



Above: Helen and Elias locate hidden marker.



Wet Red-necked Wallaby peering in. Photo by Elias Hallaj



Putter, Pablo and Hannah in "treasure hunt" Camera trapping training. Photo by Don Fletcher



Below: Namadji theatre



My native bee spotting journey

The bulletin board in NPA Bulletin December 2022 featured a notice for the publication of a new book *Native Bees of the ACT and NSW South Coast* by NPA member Peter Abbott. Here he describes the process leading to the writing of the book.

Like most journeys, the interesting parts are often unexpected – so it was with my interest in bees. I started keeping European Honey Bees about 40 years ago while living in London. At that time and for years after, I did not know there was any other type of bee. I continued to keep bees after moving to Melbourne and then Canberra. Honey Bees and I departed company when I became dangerously sensitive to their stings. After a period of being bee-less, I chanced upon an article about our native social bees, the stingless bees – these small bees can be kept in artificial hives and, best-of-all, are stingless! Unfortunately, Canberra is too cold for stingless bees, but they are happy living on the NSW South Coast, so I began a new period, which continues today, of keeping stingless bees in Eurobodalla Shire as well as further north on the NSW coast and southern Queensland.

My interest in social stingless bees led me to the wider world of native solitary bees – I began to follow the work of Anne Dollin (www.aussiebee.com.au) who published the first native bee field guide *Native bees of the Sydney region* in 2000. It opened the eyes of many people to the amazing variety of native Australian bees. My interest remained at a low level until retirement provided me with more time and opportunity to explore the subject. I was surprised to find how little was known about which species lived in this region, thus opening a new challenge – to find out.

So, armed with a research permit, I went about observing and collecting bees in the Australian National Botanic Gardens – my aim initially was simply to identify which native bees occupied the gardens. Of course, once you start looking, you find native bees everywhere, so my observing and collecting soon extended more broadly, particularly to the NSW South Coast.

At the same time, I needed to educate myself on how to identify individual species – not easy. Much of the information is tied up in difficult decision-tree keys published in scientific journals. However, help was at hand from generous colleagues – Michael Batley, Australia Museum, and Ken Walker, Victorian Museum, as well as having access to the CSIRO National Insect Collection on Black Mountain. During this period, further publications on native bees appeared, which greatly assisted my studies, and gradually I was able to identify the majority of the species in the Gardens and local region.



Author opening a stingless bee hive. Photo by Amy Cramer

Writing the book

While I found the challenge of learning about bee taxonomy interesting, most people just want to be able to recognise a native bee and perhaps identify to which group it belongs. So, the idea began to emerge of producing a book that would present both pictorial and descriptive information to allow the reader to identify many local species based largely on observations with the naked eye. I was greatly helped by many excellent nature photographers. I was also fortunate to find designer Mariana Rollgejser who understood how to make complex information accessible and attractive to readers. Mariana's design skills will be familiar to users of NPA's field guides.

The result is a book that can be used at different levels – at the top level, it should help anyone to recognise a native bee, based on general appearance and a few basic clues on how to separate bees from flies and wasps. At the next level, by focusing on specifics such as size, colour and other physical features, the genus and, in some cases, the species can be identified. At a more detailed level, there are pointers to where information can be sourced for those wanting to explore in more depth, including its geographical distribution in Australia.

Native bee spotting is an enjoyable activity. It engages us more closely with the natural world and reminds us of the important role that native bees play in our wellbeing. For book details go to www.nativebeesACT.net.

Peter Abbott

Native bee photos, back cover:

Top (left to right): Wasp mimic bee (*Hyleoides concinna*). By Simone Clark

Masked bee (*Amphylaeus obscuriceps*). By Phil Warburton

Bottom (left to right): Cuckoo bee (*Thyreus caeruleopunctatus*). By Peter Abbott

Teddy Bear Bee (*Amegilla bombiformis*). By Phil Warburton

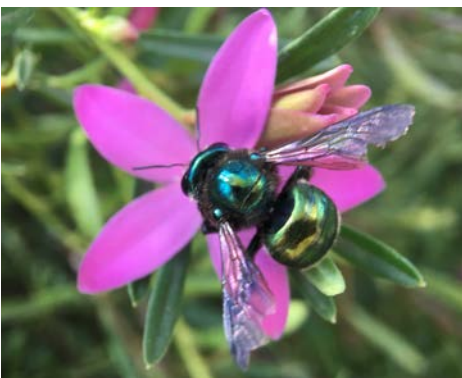


Left: Reed bee (*Exoneura species*)

Below middle: Metallic Green Carpenter bee (*Xylocopa aeratus*)

Below right: Native stingless bee (*Tetragonula carbonarium*)

All three bee photos by Peter Abbott





Gudgenby kangaroos. Both photos by Eleanor Cotterell

Film review

Kangaroo Valley

Kangaroo Valley is a 76-minute long nature documentary by and on Netflix, the online streaming service. Sign up, and you can watch it on your smart TV. The film's location is not NSW 2577, but a 'secret valley' somewhere in the mountains. More on that later.

The film has a narrated storyline with an Eastern Grey Kangaroo mob and the local dingo pack as the main players. Mala, a female joey, and Miro, a juvenile male dingo also starting to make its way in the world, take starring roles, as does the stunning landscape and its changing moods with the weather and seasons. The narration, by Australian actor Sarah Snook, is not overly anthropomorphic and, at least until the closing sequences, the background music is in harmony with the vision.

The following players make cameo appearances: Barn Owl, Crimson Rosella, echidna, galah, koala, kookaburra, magpie, platypus, possum, Spotted Quoll, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Tawny Frogmouth, Wedge-tailed Eagle, White-winged Chough, Willie Wagtail and wombat, as well as a host of invertebrate species, not to mention the stunning flora. The film thus showcases a veritable panoply of nature.

The trials and tribulations of Mala's first year of life out of her mother, Lowanna's, pouch are a major theme of the film, the main challenges being to survive through four seasons, especially the harsh winter, and to escape the ongoing culinary intentions of the resident canines. Mala makes it, after a death-defying chase, and escape from the jaws of Miro.

The cinematography is outstanding, often spectacular and revelatory, and makes extensive use of drones. The chase sequences, and one of them in particular, may disturb some viewers: the dingo pack chases down and kills (we do not see it but no great imagination is required) the huge kangaroo that is leader of the mob. So, in that and other respects, *Kangaroo Valley* may be seen to give us a true and revealing picture of the rigours of life in its part of the world and should therefore become a valued tool in natural history education. It also serves as yet another warning to walkers and others that the Bush can be far from benign.

Now, where is this kangaroo valley? Most NPA ACT members who get out and about will detect early into viewing that the main stage is our own Namadgi National Park, and specifically Gudgenby Valley. The film builds on a five-minute segment in a 2019 Attenborough documentary *Seven Worlds, One Planet* (reviewed in *NPA Bulletin* March 2020).

While Gudgenby Valley is the main stage for *Kangaroo Valley*, to round out its story it also includes extensive footage from the broader High Country and elsewhere.

Alex Crowe reports in the *Canberra Times* of 28 December 2022 that the 300 plus hours of shooting required to make the film took place during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the film crew barred from entering Canberra and having its groceries and other essentials delivered.

In the same article, the head of Visit Canberra is reported as saying that it was expected the film's presentation of Namadgi's unique biodiversity would increase awareness of the Canberra region's great outdoors and that 'Exposing Canberra to audiences nationally and globally helps potential visitors understand what our region has to offer'. Unfortunately, capture of these benefits is unlikely unless the film is vigorously promoted, since there is no mention in it of our national park. The only fleeting clues are the inclusion of ACT Parks and Conservation and Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve in a long list of credits. Please help spread the word about it.

Four stars: highly recommended viewing.

Ed Highley



Gudgenby kangaroos

Gudgenby photos



Gudgenby Valley. All photos by Eleanor Cotterell

Rainbow Bee-eater

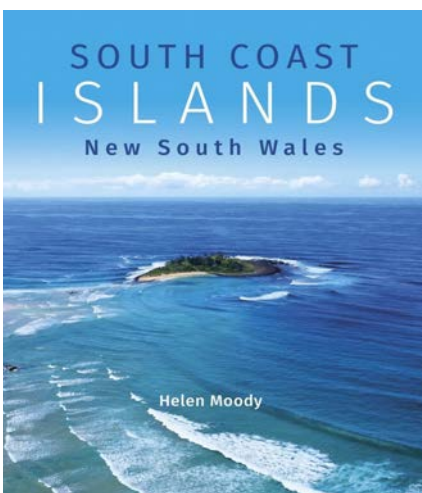
Welcome Swallows

Rainbow Bee-eater



Blue-tongue Lizards

Dusky Woodswallows



South Coast Islands

Helen Moody and Mike Jefferis, members of the NSW National Parks Association, have put together the first ever book on the islands of the South Coast of NSW. It follows on from 3 years during which they led walks and kayak trips to, past or around the 61 islands: 20 coastal islands and 41 in the estuaries, rivers and lakes open to the ocean.

This is a book for walkers and kayakers, residents and visitors, and anyone who loves nature and wild places. It tells of Aboriginal connections to the islands, the history of South Coast exploration, and the arrival of settlers and convicts. It covers the geology, flora, lighthouses, shipwrecks, bird life and environmental values of the islands. With over 200 photographs, and maps and description of how to visit every island, whether on foot or by boat, it will be a substantial, full-colour publication. Tim the Yowie Man previewed the book in the *Canberra Times* on 1 January 2023 (pp. 20, 21).

Available May–June 2023 for \$50 plus postage. All profits to conservation projects including the National Parks Association of NSW. Email southcoastislandsbook@gmail.com to reserve a copy.



*Moulting King Penguins foreground, mostly Royal Penguins behind, Macquarie Island.
All photos by Kevin McCue*

Sub-Antarctic islands trip

On 4 December 2022, Sonja Lenz and I sailed aboard *Heritage Explorer* from Bluff, New Zealand, for a 15 day cruise, designed for bird watchers, around the sub-Antarctic islands south of New Zealand, including Australia's Macquarie Island. I wanted to see the birds but I also wanted to show Sonja Macquarie Island where I spent most of 1969 monitoring earthquakes, the Earth's magnetic field, the tides and sea temperature.

The Snares

The weather gods were pleased, the seas unbelievably calm, as we zodiac-ed along The Snares coastline on the first day out. Being a nature reserve we were not allowed



Auckland Islands

to land but were close enough to see the endemic tomtit, parakeet, tern, cormorant, penguin and Mollymawk (small albatross); a lucky few saw a snipe, small and flightless. Rodents and cats never made it to The Snares. Charles Darwin should have visited here: the islands all seem to have endemic species, The Snares Crested Penguin, and snipe among them. Many have their own distinct version of a tomtit and parakeet. This was the only place we caught a glimpse of the Australasian Harrier, probably the only sub-Antarctic island inhabited by a raptor. But the vast majority of birds are seabirds. The beautifully patterned Cape Petrels breed here, as well as various albatross species including Buller's Mollymawk, prions and petrels, oyster catchers and gulls. Up to eight species of penguin live here and why not, because penguins evolved in the New Zealand region some 60 million years ago.

Left: The Snares crested penguins (Eudyptes robustus)



Rusting condensers in King Penguin colony, Macquarie Island

Core of ancient volcano, Campbell Island;
Heritage Explorer at anchor in bay.

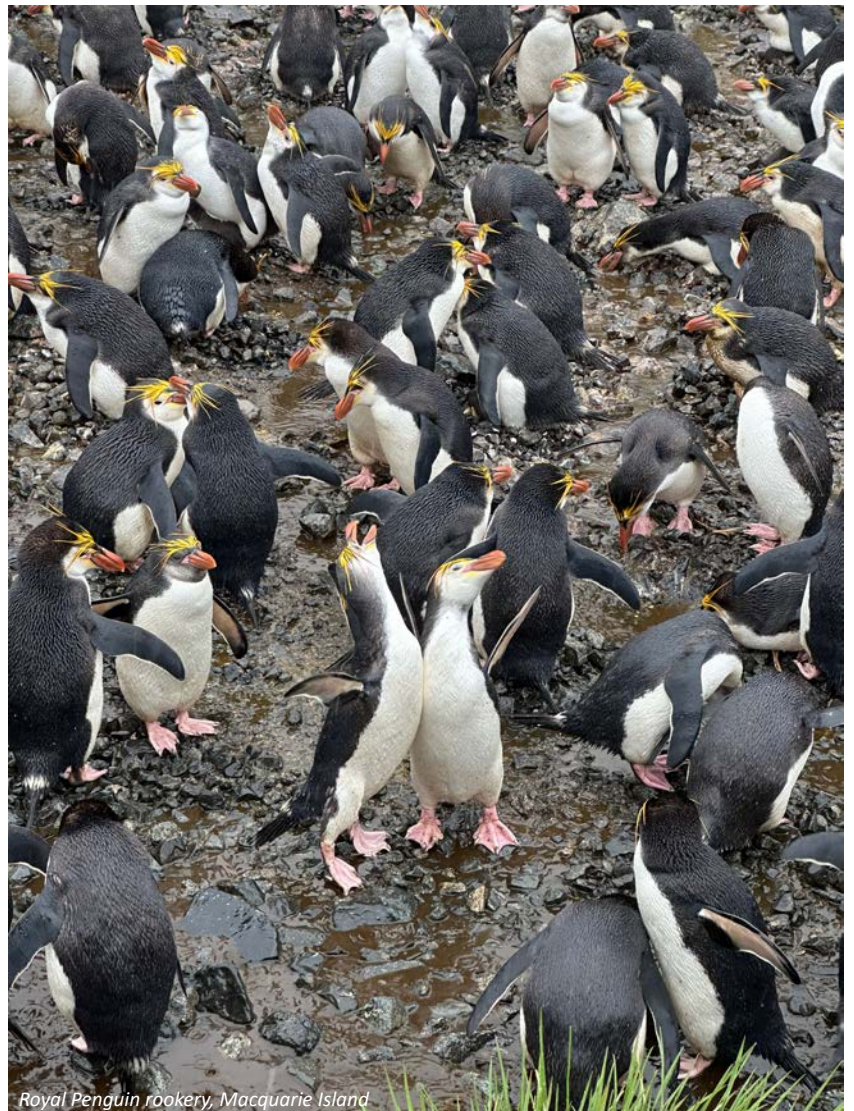


Macquarie Island

The next day and a half we steered for Australia's Macquarie Island at about 12 knots, our southernmost waypoint, almost half way to Antarctica and north of the Antarctic convergence. We landed at Sandy Bay on the west coast and about a 5 km walk from the Antarctic Division's base on the isthmus at the north end of the island. The beach was crowded with King and Royal Penguins, keeping their distance from enormous brown blobs that turned out to be moulting Elephant Seals and watched intently by Skuas and Giant Petrels for any opportunity to turn them into a meal. It rained as we did a pre-landing recce in the zodiacs, the only time we got really wet. On shore we were herded along a boardwalk to a Royal Penguin rookery perched about 50 m above the beach, an incredibly noisy and offensively odiferous place, I imagine like London might have been pre-plumbing.

A big change was evident in the vegetation on shore, now green and lush, dominated by the Macquarie Island Cabbage that has regrown in the past decade after being totally grazed by introduced rabbits. This was the only island devoid of trees so ground- and tunnel-nesting birds were easy prey for introduced cats. On the steep, grey-cobbled beach were the stark remains of a brutal past, the digesters where early British sealers rendered down the seals, and later penguins when the seals ran out, for their oil.

Zodiac returning from Macquarie Island



Royal Penguin rookery, Macquarie Island



Juvenile male Elephant Seals in training, Macquarie Island

Next morning the ship repositioned off Lusitania Bay, about three-quarters of the way down the island, and we again boarded the zodiacs for a non-landing shoreline cruise to be delighted and amazed by yet more penguins and seals, the island teeming with birdlife. The ship then turned north and anchored a few hundred metres off the narrow isthmus, the buildings and weather radar dome conspicuous. The sun came out, the wind abated, the sea was calm but the landing was aborted due to the swell – so near, yet so far.

Campbell Island

Once the exploratory zodiacs were reloaded we headed north for Campbell Island. Advances in technology mean that it is no longer permanently manned, as it had been in 1968–69. The buildings remain, occupied occasionally by summer scientists and maintenance workers.



Mating Hooker's Sea Lions barring path, Campbell Island

On landing we again followed a boardwalk that led to the other side of the island with splendid views over the ancient volcanic landform and bays, past nesting Royal Albatrosses. We had to bypass a pair of amorous Hooker Sea Lions that refused to give up their sunbaking spot on the dry boardwalk.

Antipodes Island

Progressing northward, we visited the Antipodes and The Pyramid, perhaps the highlights of our cruise for the isolation and sheer number of birds, penguins and seals, not that we landed but the skipper positioned us very close to shore for perfect bird spotting. The first evidence of human activity, cray pots, increased as we sailed further north until the



Auckland Island parakeet



Southern Skua, Macquarie Island



Eared fur seal pup scratching, Antipodes Island

Chathams, with a permanent population of 663 (2018 census), two-thirds of it Maori, a general store, cafe and museum which had only been opened a week before by the Prime Minister.

The 2-day voyage back to Bluff was quiet, the weather fine, the sea relatively calm. Expert speakers regaled us with interesting lectures on the sub-Antarctic.

Feral eradications

Rat and mice were eradicated from New Zealand's 11,000 ha Campbell Island in 2001 and Australia's 13,000 ha Macquarie Island (cats and rabbits too) in 2014, after a 7-year program. Feral animal



Cape Petrel, Campbell Island



Salvin's Albatross, Bounty Island

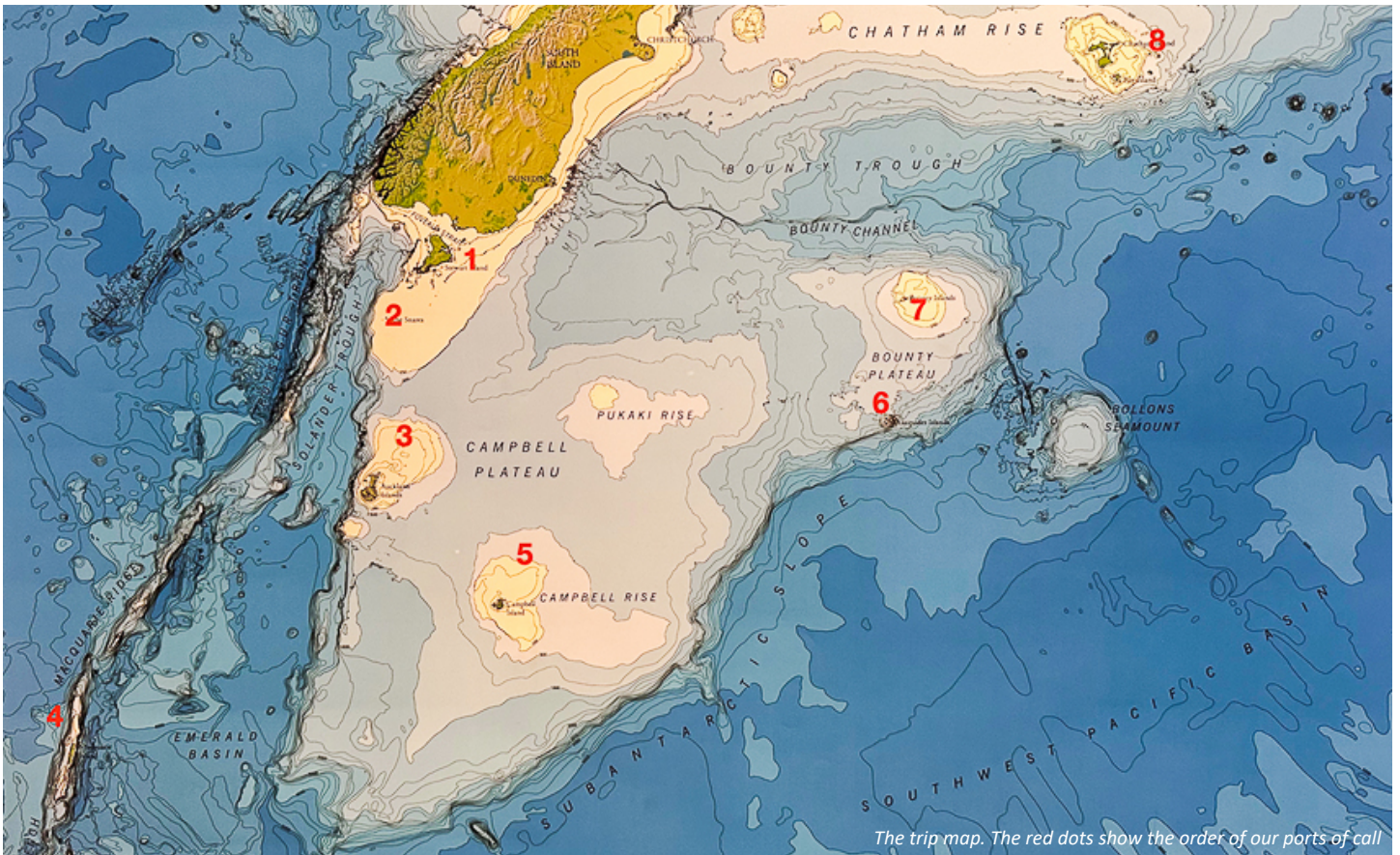


eradication from New Zealand islands began in 1960, with the Brown Rat (*Rattus norvegicus*) on tiny Maria Island. At that time half of 1 per cent of New Zealand islands were free of mammal pests, today 10 per cent are pest-free.

The New Zealand Department of Conservation also tackled the main Auckland Island (mice, cats and

pigs), Antipodes Island (mice) and Enderby Island (mice, rabbits). The sites are of huge biodiversity value and such one-off eradication operations ensure the recovery and preservation of incredibly significant ecosystems. The sub-Antarctic region has a very low risk of mammalian pest species returning, but only if visiting ships comply with strict protocols.

Kevin McCue



The trip map. The red dots show the order of our ports of call



Lower Murrumbidgee kayak trip

Beautiful Barmah Forest. All photos by Mike Bremers

Date: 18–23 September 2022

Participants: Mike Bremers (leader), Craig Watson, Alan Davison

Weather: Sunny or partly cloudy, with rain on one night

The lower Murrumbidgee River downstream of Balranald extends for 101 km to its confluence with the Murray River which is 15 km upstream of the small town of Boundary Bend. I had paddled this section of river at low water levels during drought in 2008 and then again during flood in 2016 – a totally different experience. High rainfall over much of NSW in early August meant that conditions for this paddle would be akin to those prevailing in 2016.



Murrumbidgee River during 2008 drought

It was just Craig and I for the start of the trip, three

others were interested but the timing was not right. This was Craig's first long-distance flatwater paddle. Alan is an acquaintance of mine who has spent most of 2022 in his kayak paddling the rivers of the Murray–Darling Basin covering about 9,000 km in the process. His latest exploratory journey was down the Wakool River (an anabranch of the Murray) and our paths would cross at the Murrumbidgee–Murray confluence.

Most of the first morning of 18 September was spent doing a car shuffle between the caravan parks at Balranald and Boundary Bend and loading up our kayakers with gear at Balranald. The river was flowing well, about 2.5 km/h, so we were paddling comfortably at about 8 km/h. Our first stop was 9 km downstream at Yanga Woolshed which is now part of Yanga National Park. It has very interesting information panels about the history, ecology and geography of the area. I was particularly taken with an 1877 map



Craig paddling through forest on day 2

which noted swarms of snakes and extensive reed beds. The reed beds have now largely disappeared due to reduced flooding and the number of snakes has crashed due to the scarcity of frogs on which they feed. I have rarely seen snakes when paddling down the inland rivers despite earlier accounts

reporting large numbers and 'shooting them from canoes was an exciting and enjoyable pastime' (1937)¹. So, no doubt snake hunting was a factor in past times but more recently environmental factors are a major factor in their decline.

Later that afternoon we made our first camp at Balranald Weir, 19 km downstream of Balranald, where we found a comfortable couch (probably placed by locals) beside a fireplace and plenty of flat open ground for tents. The night was clear and cold, we were greeted on our second morning with early mist over the water, followed by a sunny day. Balranald Weir was completely underwater so offered no impediment.



Koala



Kingfisher

The river in places was flowing out into the swamps, large areas of which were covered in duckweed (Azolla), a native aquatic fern, making it look like a well-manicured lawn.

Usually, the waters of inland rivers are very turbid so I was surprised to see that it was



Craig, Alan on Murray River

clear with little suspended sediment. No doubt much of the sediment had already settled out in the upstream swamps. During our lunch break I counted five scar trees within a short distance. At the end of the day we camped on a natural levee (formed when a river floods, larger material being deposited closest to the river bank). This meant we were on a narrow strip of dry land along the river's edge. Though it was only centimetres above water level we knew the river would rise only one centimetre overnight.

Day three continued much the same. Rain was forecast for later in the day so we made camp on a gentle grassy slope about 88 km downstream of Balranald. The banks on the final 20 km or so of the Murrumbidgee are higher than further upstream, so finding a good site was easy. Fortunately, the rain fell only during the night, but water dripped onto my sleeping bag and I found a puddle under my mattress. I already knew the tent zips were failing so it was enough to convince me that I needed a new tent.

The next morning was cool and heavily overcast but we had only 13 km to paddle to the confluence. Sturt's description of the final few kilometres is appropriate: 'its tortuous course, swept round to every point of the compass with the greatest irregularity'¹

As a result of the high water we were able to cut off some bends and paddle through the trees.

We arrived at the confluence and noted the clear tannin-coloured Murrumbidgee waters mixing with the more turbid brown Murray waters. Alan came paddling down the Murray half an hour later. He was the first person we had seen since

Yanga Woolshed 3 days before. We spent the rest of the cool cloudy day camped at the confluence chatting around the fire. That night, as with the previous nights, we went to sleep accompanied by a loud chorus of frog calls but with no evidence yet of an increased snake population.

The Murray was flowing even faster than the Murrumbidgee so it was an easy 2-hour paddle the next morning to Boundary Bend. It was a privilege to see the river in these high flow conditions, spreading into wetlands where it brings renewal.

In order to experience another part of the river we decided to do a day trip down the Murray from Picnic Point to Barmah so, after retrieving Craig's car from Balranald, we headed for Picnic Point Caravan Park, a drive of about 300 km upstream. After a car shuffle early the next morning (23 September) we set off paddling the 28 km to Barmah. Barmah Choke is a relatively narrow part of the Murray that has a limited capacity to carry floodwaters before it spills out over the flood plain. It is surrounded by the largest River Red Gum forest in the world which is protected by national parks on both sides of the river. During the second half of the paddle there was no dry land in sight on which to have a break but we were able to experience the joys of paddling through the forest in this special area.

Cockatoos, Night Herons and kangaroos were quite common during the trip, but some feral pigs and goats were also seen.

Mike Bremers

Reference:

1. *Murray-Darling Journeys*, Bremers, Angela and Bremers, Mike, 2017.



Balranald Weir camp

Hunting Orange Hawkweed

Orange, Mouse-ear and King Devil Hawkweed pose major threats to Australia's temperate and subalpine regions. The weeds spread, form dense mats and outcompete other species. A NSW NPWS program seeks to eradicate the weeds, and you can help. During summer the hawkweed eradication program engages volunteers from NSW and the ACT to work alongside field officers to locate hawkweed.

In December 2022, I was part of a team of four volunteers based at Khancoban, aiming to find Orange Hawkweed in western Kosciuszko National Park. Others in the group were a Sydney couple Joy and Ian, and NPA ACT member Hugh Coppel. Teams of 10 are more common later in the season, some based at Perisher and many being repeat volunteers.

Volunteering was easy. For a week, NPWS provided us with a comfortable share house at Khancoban. All we needed to bring was our linen and food or, like me, you can become a regular at Khancoban Alpine Inn for hearty pub meals. On a couple of evenings, field officers joined us for a drink and chat.



Off road travel. All photos by Phillip Moore

Volunteers are trained to identify weeds, survey plots, lead out survey lines and record finds. If you are able to walk 4 km a day over uneven ground then you will be fine. You will need waterproof walking boots and long gaiters. All volunteers receive a national park shirt.

On day one you receive a health and safety briefing and are shown how to identify the weed. You are then driven up onto the range for a practice. The weed's distinctive feature is the lance-shaped to elliptic hairy leaves, up to 150 mm across. At first they are difficult to identify but once you get your eye in you are set. If in doubt, ask a field officer.

The second and subsequent mornings, Bec, the Volunteer Coordinator, would drive us to the depot for a 7:30 start. We got to know the field officers who were all friendly and full of stories. Survey areas were based on where hawkweed had been found in previous seasons by people, drones or detection dogs. After a drive and walk, the survey coordinates are checked and you form an 'emu parade' looking for the weed. Once found, it is marked, GPS coordinates recorded, and later a field officer or contractor returns and sprays. Volunteers do not handle herbicides.

The days are long but enjoyable with great views. We worked mainly near Round Mountain and found a few isolated hawkweeds, including in areas previously sprayed, but no large



infestations. The work benefits from a systematic approach, with year-on-year repeat surveys.

We were driven along fire trails and roads not open to the public, off the Khancoban-Cabramurra road. One day we travelled Happy Jacks Road, past Happy Jacks Dam, for views of Lake Eucumbene. The High Country saw clouds rolling in over the mountains, charred snow gums recovering slowly from the 2020 fires, running streams and bogs, meadows of long, flattened grass, and emerging wild flowers. Days were mostly sunny with only a few showers.

For more information: www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/things-to-do/volunteer-activities/hunting-hawkweed.

Progress on eradication

Jo Caldwell, Senior Hawkweed Control Officer, NPWS, advises that Hawkweed eradication is currently on track. 'We are surveying more ground and finding less hawkweed, even with humans, dogs and drones searching for the weeds. Over 9 per cent of all known sites are considered locally eradicated (retired). Retired means an infestation has been hawkweed free for at least 9 years. That is, seed longevity is said to be 6-7 years: each site is monitored annually and if it is hawkweed free for 9 years (2 extra years to be sure), it can be retired.'

'Each season we revisit known infestations. Last season, 72 per cent of known Orange Hawkweed infestations had no re-emergence and 65 per cent of known Mouse-ear Hawkweed sites had no re-emergence.'

On volunteers, Jo said 'Volunteers have played a significant role within the program. In the early days, volunteers contributed the majority of survey hours and have been responsible for finding 17 per cent of all known hawkweed detections. Proving people are better than dogs and drones.'

Phillip Moore



Recording data



Lining up to search

NPA outings program

Bushwalk grading guide *March – June 2023*



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) Walks arranged on a joint NPA, BBC (*Brindabella Bushwalking Club*) and CBC (*Canberra Bushwalking Club*) basis for 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 **45 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:

(See also on our website <https://www.npaact.org.au/index.php/bushwalking/npa-act-covid19-safe-outings-procedures>.)

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 2023 (page 2 of 4)

<p>5 March Sunday walk</p> 	<p>ACT – North Second in series of walks visiting cardinal points on ACT border. Meet for 8:30 am departure at Centennial Trail track head, Hoskins and Hall Streets, Hall. Pleasant undulating walk along trail to ACT's most northerly point. Option to ascend One Tree Hill for views. Return same way. Register with leader, preferably by email, by 4 March.</p>	<p>Maps: Hall, Bedulluck (just) 1:25,000 Grading: 3A Leader: Rod Griffiths Contact: 0410 875 731 or rod.blackdog@gmail.com</p>
<p>11 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 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>11–13 March Long weekend pack walk</p> 	<p>Broken Dam Hut and Tabletop Mountain A walk to Broken Dam Hut and Tabletop Mountain. Possible visits to site of Four Mile Hut (burnt 2019) and Elaine Mine. Contact leader early, as numbers limited, to arrange transport and meeting times.</p>	<p>Maps: Cabramurra, Denison 1:25,000 Grading: 2A/B/C Drive: 320 km, \$144 per car Leader: Steven Forst Contact: 0428 195 236 or steven.forst@iinet.net.au</p>
<p>13 March Monday morning walk</p> 	<p>Ginninderry to Shepherds Lookout Meet 8:30 am at The Link car park, McClymont Way, Strathnairn [UBD map 36, C11]. Follow established track south to Shepherds Lookout. Views of Murrumbidgee and mountains the whole way. Return same route. Easy grades, 9 km. Brunch at Strathnairn Cafe. Contact leader by 12 March.</p>	<p>Grading: 1A Leader: Brian Slee Contact: 6281 0719 or brianslee@iprimus.com.au</p>
<p>19 March Sunday walk</p>	<p>ACT – South Third in series of walks visiting cardinal points on ACT border. Meet for 8 am departure at Lanyon Marketplace carpark (near Tharwa Drive/Box Hill Avenue roundabout), Conder. Starting from Boboyan Road on ACT/NSW border, walk through forests and creek flats of Namadgi to blazed tree at ACT's southernmost point. Walk is on fire trails but includes some steady climbs and descents. Register with leader, preferably by email, by 18 March.</p>	<p>Map: Bredbo 1:25,000 Grading: 3A Drive 120 km, \$54 per car Leader: Rod Griffiths Contact: 0410 875 731 or rod.blackdog@gmail.com</p>
<p>22 March Wednesday walks</p>	<p>Joint NPA / BBC / CBC activity <i>Details are emailed to those on the Wednesday Walks email list. Otherwise contact leader.</i></p>	<p>Medium/hard Leader: Philip Gatenby Contact: 0401 415 446 or philip.gatenby@gmail.com Easy/medium Leader: Mike S Contact: 0412 179 907</p>
<p>25 March Saturday work party</p>	<p>Rendezvous Creek willow control Meet 8 am at Kambah Village shops. Work will involve searching for and treating willows upstream from Boboyan Road. Most tools and herbicide provided. Please bring gloves. If you can provide power drill with bit (around 10 mm) and spare battery and/or hand axe, please advise leader. Be prepared for wet feet! Book with leader by 23 March.</p>	<p>Drive: 92 km, \$42 per car Leader: Martin Chalk Contact: 0411 161 056</p>
<p>26 March Sunday walk</p> 	<p>Rendezvous and Middle creeks Meet 8 am at Kambah Village shops. Walk from Rendezvous Creek car park to historic sites including remains of Rowleys Hut, stockyards, air-strip, grave, rock shelters and cascades on Middle Creek for lunch. Mostly off-track in grasslands but with some light scrub.</p>	<p>Map: Rendezvous Creek 1:25,000 Grading: 3A/C Drive: 100 km, \$45 per car Leader: Mike S Contact: 0412 179 907</p>
<p>1 April Saturday walk</p> 	<p>Corang Lagoon Walk follows newly developing route from the north to Corang Lagoon. A combination of fire trail, light scrub and some rock scrambling. 20 km, height gain of 350 m and several water crossings, which takes over 8 hours. Early start essential; limit of 8. Book with leader, preferably by email, by 30 March.</p>	<p>Map: Corang 1:25,000 Grading: 3A/C/E Drive: 216 km, \$100 per car Leader: Philip Gatenby Contact: philip.gatenby@gmail.com or 0401 415 446</p>

NPA outings program March – June 2023 (page 3 of 4)

<p>8 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 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>10 April Monday holiday walk</p> 	<p>Queanbeyan end of Cuumbeun Cuumbeun Nature Reserve offers opportunity to explore the beautiful bush on ridge we usually just drive through on the way to coast. Walk follows fire trails to Faunce Hill and closes the loop on footpads. Good views. Several minor creeks crossings and some steep and gravelly sections. Consider bringing sticks. 3.5 to 4 hrs; home for lunch. Distance: 11 km, ascent: 370 m. Book with leader for meeting arrangements.</p>	<p>Map: Hoskinstown 1:25,000 Grading: 2A Leader: Marlene Eggert Contact: marleneeggert@bigpond.com or 0458 584 433</p>
<p>15 April Saturday walk</p> 	<p>ACT – West Fourth and last walk to each of cardinal points on ACT border. Meet 8 am at Weston. Set out from Mount Aggie car park. Initially follow road to past Mount Franklin turnoff and then off-track to westerly point. Continue along border through to Mount Ginini before following roads back to Mount Franklin and along border to cars. Nice alpine country and great views. 15 km with 450 m of ascent. Book with leader, preferably by email, by 14 April.</p>	<p>Maps: Tidbinbilla, Corin Dam 1:25,000 Grading: 2A/B/C Drive: 120 km, \$54 per car Leader: Rod Griffiths Contact: 0410 875 731 or rod.blackdog@gmail.com</p>
<p>16 April Sunday morning nature walk</p> 	<p>Fetherston Gardens 10 am start. Short, easy walk (~1.5 hrs) through Fetherston Gardens, Weston. Learn about its history and restoration to its current beautiful state. Optional morning tea provided by volunteers at finish for small donation. Numbers limited, bookings required.</p>	<p>Grading: 1A Leader: Jan Morgan Bookings: Cynthia at cynthia@npaact.org.au</p>
<p>22 April Saturday work party</p>	<p>Bullen Range fence removal Meet 9 am at Learmonth Drive, Kambah, just west of Athllon Drive. Continuation of removal of redundant stock fences in Murrumbidgee River Corridor. Location of work party advised closer to date. Please bring gloves. Tools provided. Book with leader by 20 April.</p>	<p>Drive: 25 km, \$12 per car Leader: Michaela Popham Contact: 0413 537 333</p>
<p>23 April Sunday walk</p> 	<p>Mount Gingera via Stockyard Spur Meet 8 am in south side location. Suitable for fit and experienced bushwalkers. Demanding but beautiful walk to ACT's second highest peak. Climb steeply through forest to woodlands on top of Brindabellas. Visit Pryors Hut en route. All round views. Fire trails and footpads, 21.3 km, total ascent 1,150 m, including steep 500 m gain in first 2 km. Return same route. Book with leader by 5 pm, 21 April. Limit: 12.</p>	<p>Map: Corin Dam 1:25,000 Grading: 4A Drive: 90 km, \$40 per car Leader: Cynthia Burton Contact: 0488 071 203 or cynthia@npaact.org.au</p>
<p>25 April Tuesday holiday walk</p> 	<p>Lake Burley Griffin: eastern circuit Meet 9:30 am at National Carillon car park. Follow path east under Kings Avenue Bridge and proceed via Duntroon Dairy and Molonglo River to Jerrabomberra Wetlands. Sit down lunch at Kingston Foreshore. Return via Kings Avenue Bridge. Contact leader by 24 April.</p>	<p>Map: UBD Canberra street directory Grading: 1A Leader: Brian Slee Contact: 6281 0719 or brianslee@iprimus.com.au</p>
<p>30 April Sunday walk</p> 	<p>Lower Orroral loop Meet 8:30 am at Kambah Village shops car park. 18 km walk in lower Orroral Valley including Orroral homestead, Orroral picnic area through to Link Road crossing. Return northern side of river joining up with Orroral Heritage trail at footbridge. Walk is mainly on fire trails and grassy paths.</p>	<p>Maps: Rendezvous Creek, Corin Dam 1:25,000 Grading: 2A/B Drive: 92 km, \$41 per car Leader: Steven Forst Contact: 0428 195 236 or steven.forst@inet.net.au</p>
<p>3 or 4 May Wednesday or Thursday morning walk</p> 	<p>Trees @ ANU Vice-Chancellor's residence 10 am start. Opportunity to visit gardens of residence as part of Tree Week. Walk is mainly flat on lawns and paths, 1.5 to 2 hours. Option of joining us on either 3 or 4 May. Numbers limited, bookings required.</p>	<p>Grading: 1A Leader: Jan Morgan Booking: Cynthia at cynthia@npaact.org.au</p>

NPA outings program March – June 2023 (page 4 of 4)

<p>7 May Sunday walk</p> 	<p>Jerrabomberra ramble Start from The Scar Recreation Park, Southbar Road, Karabar, Queanbeyan. Climb Mount Jerrabomberra through bush to lookout with great views, then descend and cross Edwin Land Parkway into adjacent bushland. Explore the footpads and tracks down to Barracks Creek before returning to Parkway and start point. Home for lunch. Distance: 12 km, ascent: 320 m. Book with leader for meeting arrangements.</p>	<p>Maps: Canberra, Tuggeranong 1:25,000 Grading: 2A Leader: Marlene Eggert Contact: marleneeggert@bigpond.com or 0458 584 433</p>
<p>13 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 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 Sunday walk</p> 	<p>Weston to the Arboretum Meet 9:30 am at Dillon Close, Weston [UBD map 67, J11]. Follow paths to Weston Ponds, cross Molonglo and have lunch among weeping snow gums. Return via arboretum plantations, Barrer and Bold Hills. 11 km, a couple of steep climbs. Autumn colours. Afternoon tea Sakeena's, Coleman Court. Contact leader by 13 May.</p>	<p>Map: UBD Canberra street directory Grading: 2A/B/C Leader: Brian Slee Contact: 6281 0719 or brianslee@iprimus.com.au</p>
<p>21 May Sunday walk</p> 	<p>Pierces Hill Meet 8 am at Weston. Walk through meadows of northern Tidbinbilla and pines abutting Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. Start with solid climb up Tidbinbilla Range Road before undulating along top of ridge to Pierces Hill. Follow fire trails out of nature reserve and through pines back to cars. Register with leader, preferably by email, by 20 May.</p>	<p>Maps: Tidbinbilla, Cotter Dam 1:25,000 Grading: 2A Drive 53 km, \$24 per car Leader: Rod Griffiths Contact: 0410 875 731 or rod.blackdog@gmail.com</p>
<p>24 May Wednesday walks</p>	<p>Joint NPA / BBC / CBC activity <i>Details are emailed to those on the Wednesday Walks email list. Otherwise contact leader.</i></p>	<p>Medium/hard Leader: Philip Gatenby Contact: 0401 415 446 or philip.gatenby@gmail.com Easy/medium Leader: Steven Forst Contact: 0428 195 236 or steven.forst@iinet.net.au</p>
<p>27 May Saturday work party</p>	<p>Stockyard arboretum exotic control Meet 8 am at Dillon Close, Weston. Work party will search for and removing pine wildings and juniper. Tools provided. Please bring gloves. Approximately 60 min walk to work site. Subject to good weather. Book with the leader by 25 May.</p>	<p>Drive: 126 km, \$56 per car Leader: Martin Chalk Contact: 0411 161 056</p>
<p>4 June Sunday walk</p> 	<p>Queanbeyan River walk Walk starts at suspension bridge in Queanbeyan. Follow river to Ellerton Drive bridge, cross and walk past Queen Elizabeth Park (toilet facilities), old Queanbeyan cemetery and cross into Oaks Estate. Return via Queanbeyan Railway Station. Optional coffee break at Millhouse Cafe before returning to cars. Distance: 13.7 km, ascent: 250 m. Book with leader for meeting arrangements.</p>	<p>Map: Queanbeyan 1:25,000 Grading: 2A Leader: Marlene Eggert Contact: marleneeggert@bigpond.com or 0458 584 433</p>
<p>10 June Saturday work party</p> 	<p>Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group Meet 9 am at Namadgi Visitor Centre. Removal of damaged and redundant enclosure at site to be determined in Gudgenby Valley. Car-pooling available for journey there and tools will be provided. Contact leader for registration arrangements.</p>	<p>Leader: Doug Brown Contact: 6247 0239 or kambalda@tpg.com.au</p>
<p>24 June Saturday work party</p>	<p>Fence removal – Orroral Valley Meet 8 am at Kambah Village shops. First work party to remove stock fences in Orroral Valley. Exact location of fence to be determined. All tools provided, just bring gloves. Book with the leader by 22 June.</p>	<p>Drive: 70 km, \$32 per car Leader: Brian Slee Contact: 6281 0719 or brianslee@iprimus.com.au</p>

NPA work party summary – November 2022 to January 2023

Month	Activity	Agency	Participants
November	Lower Glendale, 600 m north-east of Glendale picnic area. Woody weed control on the creek: cut/dabbed 240 briars, 5 blackberries, 1 apple tree, 14 plum trees. Surveyed boundary fence of 'tank paddock' located opposite Glendale picnic area: about half is in treed and/or rocky country and would be difficult to extract. Remainder is accessible.	PCS	4
December	No work party		
January	Moores Hill, just north of Cotter campground. Woody weed control: cut/dabbed 182 blackberries, 268 briars, 125 mahonia, 254 <i>Acacia baileyana</i> , 135 hawthorns, 14 pyracanthas, 4 apple trees, 4 pine trees.	PCS	6 <i>Martin Chalk</i>



Dickson Pond. All photos by Brian Slee

Bushwalk reports

North Canberra parks and wetlands

Date: 8 January 2023

Participants: Brian Slee (leader), Virginia Buring, Marlene Eggert, Joanna Korecki, Margaret Power, Simone Whyte

Weather: Blue sky; warm; occasional breeze

How things change: since this walk was last conducted in January 2019, light rail has arrived on a route lined by eucalypts and native grasses, all of which were prophesied to fail – they are thriving. On the other hand, Summernats, whose time looked up, are still with us. Polished and colourful motors now promenade inner Canberra's streets in greater numbers, begging to be noticed.

And after a year of La Niña, the parks and wetlands of North Canberra are in great shape. Before setting off to see them, we gathered at 9 am for coffee at Edgars in Ainslie and welcomed back Margaret from forced retirement. A quick tour of the bronze animal sculptures also preceded our departure. Hey, the Tawny Frogmouths!

Bill Pye Park was to be our first stop but was under renovation so we took back streets and headed for Dickson Pond off Dutton Street. There seemed to be more dogs than ducks present; perhaps waterfowl are currently spoilt for choice.

An enduring feature of North Canberra is the shadiness of its paths. We proceeded west under an orderly avenue of eucalypts to Dickson swimming pool then under oaks to Northbourne Avenue. Soon after crossing we were at Lyneham Pond. Dickson Pond was weed-free due to volunteer effort and Lyneham looks similarly well-tended. A passing Mandurah, WA, resident stopped to chat.

David Street pond in O'Connor is reached through parks along Sullivans Creek and then across a playing field. It is hidden away and must be a favourite among locals. From there we were soon in Haig Park, Turner, on the way to Lonsdale Street, arriving at noon. We were hoping for a shady outdoor table at eighty/twenty and, voilà, there it was. A chatty lunch followed as we munched through large and tasty meals. To get back to Ainslie we followed Elouera Street east, found Ainslie Primary School and kept stickybeaking at the modest but million dollar cottages along the way to Corroboree Park. The park is worth a visit in its own right, full of history and rural feeling. We passed our fourth tennis club of the day and were back at Ainslie at 2 pm.

An easy 10 km stroll through a part of Canberra better visited on foot than by car. Thanks for joining us, Virginia. The outing is worth repeating early January, but May would be a good alternative as the trees would be turning colour and temperatures would be reliably below 'too hot'.

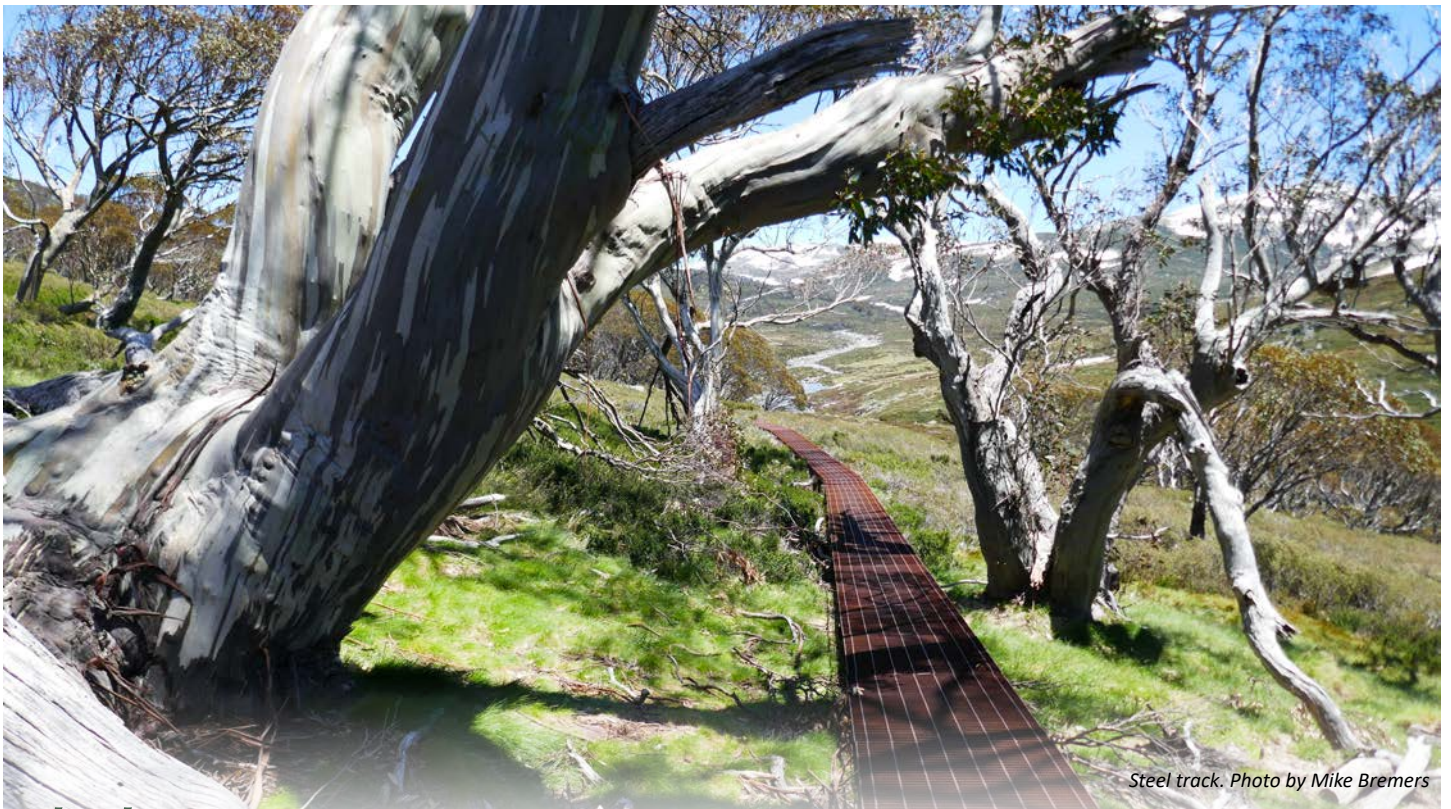
Brian Slee



Eucalypt avenue



Joanna, Sim, Virginia, Margaret, Marlene



Steel track. Photo by Mike Bremers

Charlotte Pass to Spencers Creek suspension bridge

Date: 18 December 2022

Participants: Mike Bremers (leader), Sheree Bamforth, Nancie Lim, Lisa Marchant, Stephen Marchant, Terrylea Reynolds, Brian Slee, Phillip Starr

Weather: Blue sky; cool; chilly breeze in exposed areas
Snowies Alpine Walk (formerly Snowies Iconic Walk) is coming to fruition. It began with the upgrading of the Main Range track (Charlotte Pass to Mount Kosciuszko via Blue Lake). Stage 2 is a new track which leaves the Main Range walk about 2/3 the way down from Charlotte Pass to Snowy River crossing. It heads north, staying east of the Snowy, before reaching Illawong, 7 km away. Guthega is 2 km further north on an existing track. Officially opened mid-2022, informal intrusion began late 2021.

This outing took in the Charlotte Pass to Spencers Creek bridge section, 1 km short of Illawong. The track initially passes through (it can feel like transgresses) what was once almost impenetrable bushland, now easily negotiated on a series of narrow steel steps and crossings. Steel gradually gives way to granite paving and gravel.

We had gathered at Calwell at 6:30 am and travelled in two vehicles to Jindabyne for coffee at Nimmitabel Bakery. The Ultra-Trail Kosciuszko running crowd had mercifully dispersed, so parking was relatively easy at Charlotte Pass. We set off at 9:30 am; the snow-laden peaks seemed to explain the chilly breeze, but we were fortunately protected from it by Guthrie Ridge as we progressed north.

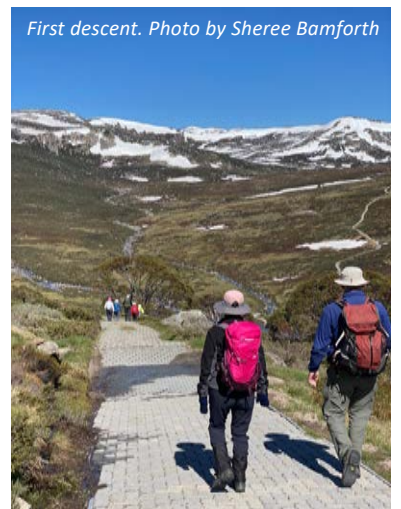
Apart from lovely views of the Snowy, its junction with Blue Lake Creek and the line of Crummer Spur as it rises to Mount Twynam, a big surprise was the birdlife which inhabits a small valley about half way along the track. Apart from the usual ravens, pipits and rosellas, we heard several native songbirds which are not often found at this elevation (1,800 m). Snow Gums in the valley were not affected by borers, but the wildflowers had been delayed by the cold summer.

Lunch was on the northern side of Spencers Creek suspension bridge. The track had mostly been ours except for a few other walkers who now began arriving. Spencers Creek was a torrent of spring melt. We departed at 1 pm and returned on the same track, rewarded by an almost continuous view of snowy peaks. A raven chick clung to the steel, unable to deploy its inadequate wings to flee; mother hovered.

The usual trudge up to Charlotte Pass ended a highly satisfying 12 km walk. We rewarded ourselves with a break on the open air deck at Stillwell Café, Charlotte Pass Village, before departing at 3:30 pm. Back at Calwell at 6. An outing worth repeating, perhaps with a car shuffle to Guthega for a walk through. Also good for winter snowshoeing now that Spencers Creek is easily crossed, although the new track is not marked with poles.

Brian Slee

First descent. Photo by Sheree Bamforth



Digital clarification. Photo by Sheree Bamforth

Nancie at Snowy River.

Mike, Sheree, Nancie, Terrylea, Lisa, Stephen, Phillip at track head. Both photos by Brian Slee





Stage 3 of Snowies Alpine Walk nears completion

Near Trapyard Creek

Stage 3 of Snowies Alpine Walk will connect Perisher Valley to Charlotte Pass via Porcupine Rocks. Apart from a short repositioned link between Perisher Valley and the existing Porcupine Track, the main construction effort is a 10 km section from just west of Porcupine Rocks to Charlotte Pass Village. Much of it has been completed but rain delayed the labour-intensive paving of a stretch south of Betts Creek and the final link to the Village. High Country visitors will in future generally be satisfied with walking newly opened Stage 2 (see previous page). However, Stage 3 is a sleeper. As it progresses south and west on Ramshead Range from Porcupine Rocks the views from it, into Thredbo Valley and along the snow-capped (even in summer) peaks of the Main Range, are remarkable. The track carefully winds through trees and rocks which frame the view. Steel structures, which keep the path above soft ground, open wide vistas, carpeted with alpine flowers in summer.

The track descends from the Range to Trapyard Creek and then contours along slopes through Snow Gums above Spencers Creek. Fewer pavers have been used in this section so it looks and feels more natural and less intrusive. A new bridge crosses Spencers Creek as it nears the Village.

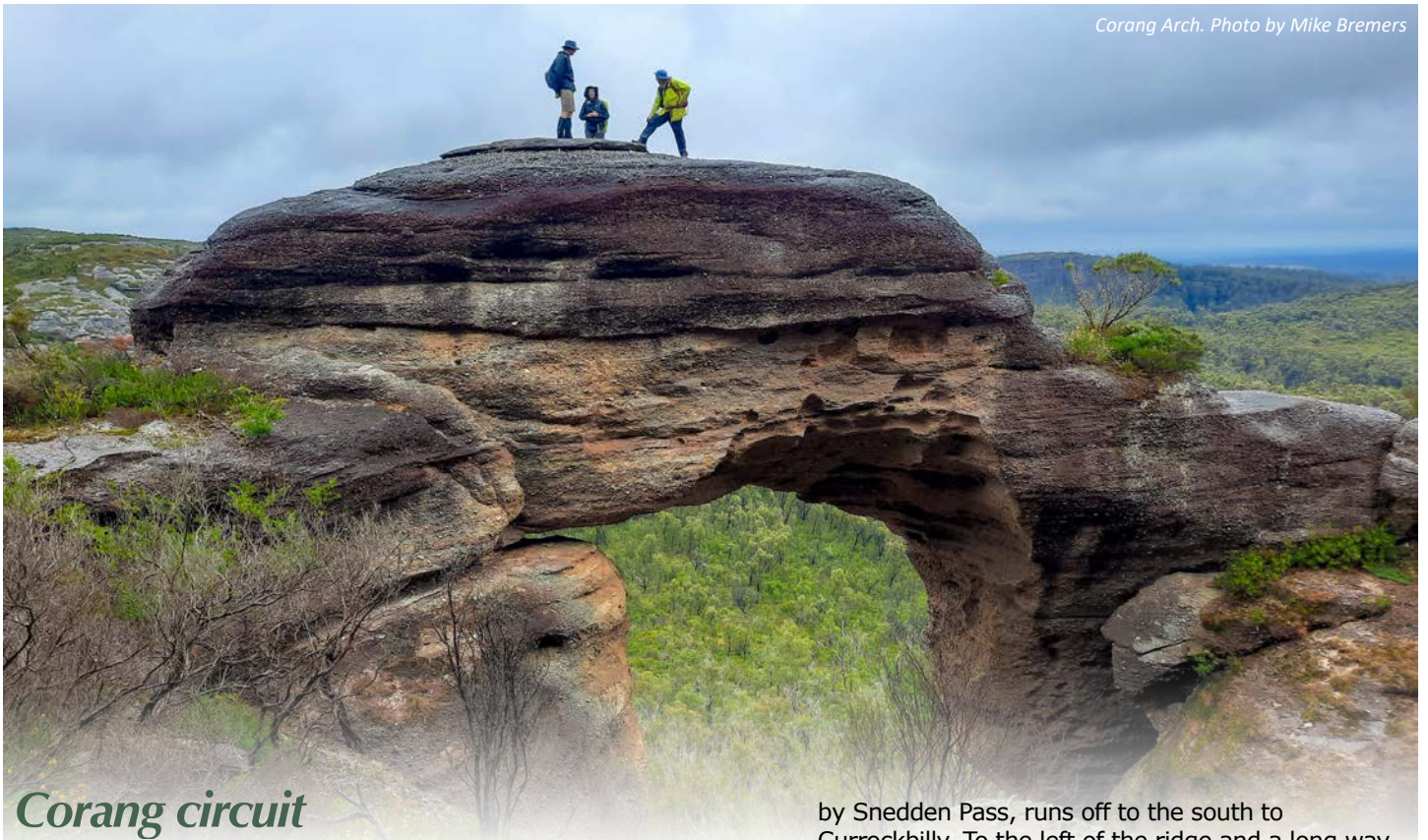
Access to the northern end can be shortened by departing Kosciuszko Road at Perisher Gap and walking an existing 2 km footpad through pretty country to the Porcupine Rocks set-off point. At the other end of Stage 3, walkers can park at the Village rather than Charlotte Pass.

It is unlikely that snow poles will be installed along Stage 3, but snowshoers will be keen to find their way into the area. It promises to be a winter wonderland. For map and progress reports: [Snowies Alpine Walk | NSW Environment and Heritage](#).

Brian Slee

Bottom left and middle: Path construction
Right: View to Thredbo Valley





Corang circuit

Date: 7 January 2023

Participants: Philip G (leader), Cynthia B, Emily B, Garry B, Geoff B, Mike B, Jan G, Noelia P

Weather: Mist, drizzle and occasional sunny breaks

Stats: 25 km and 600 m climb

After three failed NPA attempts the Corang circuit walk was completed in early 2023. From Wog Wog campground we followed the Scenic Rim Track, crossing a very full Wog Wog Creek and passing after about 4 km a track to the left. It goes to Corang Lagoon and for us would be the way back. A few kilometres further on the track crosses the Scenic Rim where Wirritin Ridge, accessible

by Snedden Pass, runs off to the south to Currockbilly. To the left of the ridge and a long way down we glimpsed Yabbaro through the mist. Beyond the rim the track skirts to the north of Korra Hill, goes over or around Corang Peak (we chose over but today there was no view), passes Corang Arch and then descends the Conglomerate Slope to Canowie Brook. Approaching the arch the mist started to clear. As the weather improved March Fly numbers increased – a small variety but still capable of delivering a bite.

At Canowie Brook, under the watchful eye of Profile Rock, the main track continues east into the heart of the Budawangs, while a footpad, developed over

Profile Rock and Mount Hoddle. Photo by Jan Gatenby





Track closed. All photos on this page by Jan Gatenby



Christmas Bells

many years, took us north along the brook to its junction with Corang River at the aptly named and spectacular Many Rock Ribs – a series of quartzite ridges perpendicular to the river with small waterfalls and deep rock pools. The footpad continues downstream on the river's southern bank to Corang Lagoon where it joins the lagoon track, an undulating 4 km between the river and the previously mentioned track junction.

The walk goes through a landscape in recovery after devastation by the

2019 bushfire. In places thick regrowth overhangs the track and in the morning after overnight drizzle the walk can be very wet, as we found out. Some of the features of the walk recalled from numerous pre-fire visits had changed dramatically as a result of the fire. A lone Cypress Pine not long after the Wog Wog Creek crossing is now a blackened skeleton, further east an old gate post resplendent in red lichen is now a hole in the ground and of the Z-shaped tree near the oddly named Tinderry View there is no sign (nor view of the Tinderrys). Many of the steps and boardwalk on the track are scorched but still largely intact. We were treated to more Christmas Bells (*Blandfordia nobilis*) than usual and to many other wildflowers, especially yellow goodenias.



Many Rock Ribs

The Corang circuit is a classic day walk. It exists by virtue of the development of the footpad along Canowie Brook and Corang River linking the lagoon track with the track to the peak. Bushwalkers had explored these areas separately for years. The informal link then created a spectacular circuit walk. Unfortunately, park managers seem to have been oblivious to the significance of the link, leading to the current unsatisfactory situation.

Opportunity missed?

Corang Lagoon is in private property and the landowner has closed the lagoon camping area and the track to the lagoon, as well as the footpad from Canowie Brook. The latter closure is about 400 m east of the lagoon. Now the only way to legally get to the lagoon is from the northern side, a major detour from the circuit. To avoid private property, we headed off track from where the footpad was closed, for about 2.5 km on a developing pad, to join the lagoon track where it re-enters the national park.

Apparently the land in question used to be leasehold land. It was never included in Morton National Park. This is

surprising, as the lagoon and rapids and rock pools downstream are in a beautiful area still largely undisturbed and worthy of inclusion in a national park. About 10 years ago the land was converted to freehold and sold.

A campaign to keep open access to Corang River at the lagoon is underway (see [Keep Corang Open Facebook Group](#)) and hopefully it will be successful. Yet, before the lagoon’s conversion to freehold an opportunity was clearly missed to have it included in the national park.

Philip Gatenby



Philip, Cynthia, atop Corang Peak. Photo by Jan Gatenby



Approaching Corang Arch. Photo by Philip Gatenby



Practice for the Conglomerate Slope. Photo by Jan Gatenby

Formations west of Arch. Photo by Jan Gatenby





Northern end of ridge. All photos by Brian Slee unless indicated otherwise

Guthrie Ridge

Date: 13 January 2023

Participants: Mike Bremers (leader), Stephen Marchant, Brian Slee, Max Smith

Weather: Mostly blue sky with distant mist; warm; occasional breeze

Add Guthrie Ridge to the list of short-length but spectacular ridges in the High Country. Like Etheridge, which NPA snowshoed in 2017 (*NPA Bulletin* September 2017), Guthrie does not attract a crowd. Skiers are towed up it by poma and quickly depart; everyone else seems to stay away.

Admittedly, this was our first visit. The plan had been to follow Spencers Creek west and climb Guthrie from the north. However, a forecast afternoon storm (later deleted) meant that it was preferable to return at the lower altitude. So, having parked next to Kosciuszko Road, downhill from Charlotte Pass, we set off at 9:30 am to climb 80 m to the top of the ridge on a footpad near the poma towers. Great views back over the Village and Pass.

Snow still streaked the Main Range beyond the crest of the ridge. The peak nearest us, a jumble of massive boulders, looked

problematic but Mike found a way around and we were soon heading north. White butterflies mingled above flowering shrubs, the country opened up panoramically to Mount Tate, the going got easy. On the

other side of a small hill was more open country, including sphagnum bogs and daisy fields; snow gums began filling spaces as we climbed to SMA trig (1,938 m; 'Mount Guthrie North') for a 10:45 am break. Stephen sacrificed blood to a March Fly for social media.

We could see Spencers Creek, but the view became restricted as we began negotiating scrubby country below the ridge crest. Boulders and massive Snow Gums (only a few with borers) got in the way but we made good



Snow Gums.

progress. The veg kept opening into shady glades. It was in one such that we stopped for lunch at 12:15 pm; no ants but some intrusive little flies. Adjacent view was to The Paralyser.



Max and Stephen

The way forward was down and Guthega Pondage could soon be seen in the distance, then Spencers Creek suspension bridge. The country opened onto alpine grass as we curved west to the steel track of Snowies Alpine Walk, next to the Snowy River. As turning north and returning via Spencers Creek would have ended in a long road

walk, we continued south to Charlotte Pass, arriving at 2 pm, 9 km. Only a few other track walkers, one shaded by a bright yellow parasol.

Having left Calwell as usual at 6:30 am, this time in Mike's Prado, we had stopped for coffee at Nimmitabel Bakery, Jindabyne; and at Sundance on the return trip. Back at Calwell at 5:45 pm after another memorable day in a part of Kosciuszko National Park new to us all. Well worth repeating; also exploring the Spencers Creek route, with a car shuffle.

Brian Slee



Panorama north. Photo by Mike Bremers

Butterfly walk at the Australian National Botanic Gardens

Date: 5 November 2022

Our group of seven set off from the visitor centre in partly cloudy, mild weather. We quickly came across a very obliging Macleay's Swallowtail, which perched low on a bush and enabled excellent views of this exquisite species. We were to see several more during the walk, mostly flying without landing.

Next we looked at some parasitic Dodder Vine which was growing on the reserve side of the path; this is the larval food plant for Varied and Blotched Dusky-blues, and right on cue we had several Varied Dusky-blues flying around us and again perching for photos. At some nearby native daisies, we also found a fresh Yellow Admiral feeding.

We then walked up the slope to look at some native grasses and native citrus, as both sites have been used in the past by butterflies for breeding, but we found nothing. We continued slowly on to the rainforest gully, which was rather quiet, and on the other side of the gully we had a look at the *Gahnia* plantings where the Flame Sedge-skipper breeds. From here we walked to the rock gardens and en route found our first Cabbage White and Caper White of the day.

The rock gardens were surprisingly quiet but did yield several Australian Painted Ladies. Walking across the nearby lawn area we searched for Common Grass-blues, but to no avail. Instead there was a very tame Caper White feeding on the clover flowers, and it even allowed us to get up close with our mobile phones for photos! Our last stop was at a few Kurrajong trees, where Bronze Flats breed and which are also a larval food plant for Tailed Emperors. We slowly walked back towards the starting point of our walk and, while we saw a few more butterflies, we did not see any new species for the day.

Suzi Bond

Top: Caper White. Photo by Suzi Bond
Middle Macleay's Swallowtail. Photo by Kevin McCue
Bottom: Blotched Dusky-blue. Photo by Kevin McCue



Aragunnu

Beach near Aragunnu

if ever
head down, trudging
sand
woosh of waves
that fill your boots
with seawater

naked
and vulnerable
holding hands
we cross the river
stumble through
shifting sands

such dark rocks
you've never seen
exposed ...
the bowels of the Earth
thrust up on a sunlit
beach

sleeping out
on that cliff top ...
a deep shell midden
where once they dived
for abalone

they hold the space ...
welcome us
to country
reassure us
we're beautiful souls

bums in the air
faces in dirt
smoke from the fire
early morning yoga
at Aragunnu

listen ...
there is always
the lull of waves
tinkle of bellbirds
the hiss of my breath

we sit
in the dust and the
smoke
and the cold ...
sit on a cliff top
and stare into fire

reclining
on the forest floor
in dappled sunlight
a wallaby joins me
journaling

who leaves
dark chocolate
beside my swag ...
is it some loving friend
or that neighbour
wallaby

you set the fire
with bark and leaves
I strike a match
red coals will glow
through the autumn
night

Gerry Jacobson

Big year for St John's Wort

The invasive, perennial weed St John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) wove a thick, yellow blanket over hills around Canberra from late spring 2022, creating an impressive but unwelcome vista. The plant has been here for many years but this infestation seemed especially severe, possibly due, among other things, to the preceding very wet winter and spring.

St John's Wort is an introduced species, native to temperate parts of Europe, Asia and North Africa. It is favoured by a Mediterranean climate – sunny, hot summers and warm, wet winters – and has spread to temperate regions worldwide as an invasive weed. It was first recorded in Australia in 1893. Each plant can produce up to 33,000 seeds per year, some of which will remain viable in the soil for decades. The plant can also spread by root suckering and will grow from root fragments. Exterminating it can be deemed impossible.

Controlling infestations of St John's Wort is a hard task and can be achieved only by strict land management involving a combination of approaches, such as sowing competitive species, strategic ploughing and herbicide use, in integrated programs

that may be feasible only on high-value crop and pasture lands.

In its native environment St John's Wort is not a problem. It is kept in check by a range of agents, including insects that feed and reproduce on it, and fungal diseases that adopt it as part of their life systems. Several of these agents have, under rigorous conditions, been imported into and released in Australia. Some have established themselves, the most promising being a leaf-feeding chrysolina beetle, but their overall effect has so far been disappointing. Perversely, the same beetle has been a huge hit in California, a major reason being, it is speculated, that its climate more closely approximates Mediterranean.

Perplexingly, despite its significant cost to agriculture and grazing, St John's Wort can still be purchased cheaply online, not because it is especially attractive but due to its other life as a medicinal herb. Its connection with St John [the Baptist] appears to be no more than that, in its home range, it blooms around his birthday, 24 June.

Interestingly, there was very little of that other great invader, Paterson's Curse, this spring and summer. It is a personal observation over many years that it and St John's Wort are dominant in alternate years.

Ed Highley

Vale Ross Bennett

Ross Bennett, author of NPA's popular *Field Guide to the Reptiles & Frogs of the Australian Capital Territory*, died in Sydney on 8 October 2022. He was well known to Canberrans as founder of the Australian Reptile Centre at Gold Creek, where he welcomed several visits by NPA ACT members. He had a passion for all animals but truly loved reptiles, and visitors to his property, tucked away in the lee of Mount Arawang, were greeted by his favourite Red-bellied Black Snake peering out from its glass enclosure in the lounge room.

The field guide benefited immensely from his expertise and enthusiasm. When a second edition came out in 2011, he was excited to be able to describe in it a new species that had arrived in the ACT in the 14 years since the first edition (see *NPA Bulletin* March 2012, cover and p. 12).

In 2018, the *Canberra Times* described Ross as a 'defender of all nature's creatures'. He was certainly someone keen to make people aware of the importance of all creatures and the need to protect the natural environment. He himself was a hands-on protector, having been a ranger in both the Victorian and ACT national parks services.

Ross will be sorely missed by all who knew him.

Rod Griffiths

National Seed Bank, Australian National Botanic Gardens

Lydia Guja, Seed Conservation Biologist / National Seed Bank Manager, and Gemma Hoyle, Seed Scientist, National Seed Bank, report on developments at the seed bank and the 'Survive and Thrive' project.

The 'living laboratories' of the Australian National Botanic Gardens (ANBG) include the National Seed Bank (NSB), Nursery and living collections. Together with associated taxonomic expertise and scientific research and data, they provide end-to-end solutions for conservation of Australian native flora. The ANBG's living collections include more than 78,000 plants representing one fifth of Australia's flowering plant species. Meanwhile, the NSB undertakes long-term seed storage for conservation and research, providing a safety net against species extinction, and developing understanding of species ecology and regeneration now and in the future. The seed bank currently holds almost 4,000 species represented by 8,803 accessions. This includes 169 species listed as threatened under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, numerous island and alpine endemics, culturally significant species, and a substantial portion of the ACT's flora, including keystone and representative species from listed ecological communities.

New seed bank coming soon

In terms of seed storage, the NSB is currently at maximum capacity. However, construction of a new, state-of-the-art facility is planned to begin in mid-2023. The new NSB will increase seed storage capacity four-fold to enable continued banking of more collections and species for at least 50 years. In addition, new laboratories will enable increased seed science research, including uncovering germination protocols to enable *in situ* restoration of rare species and species that are currently difficult to germinate. The new NSB will also have advanced capabilities with cryostorage to hold the germplasm of some species that are not amenable to conventional seed banking, including ferns, rainforest plants and orchids. Cryopreservation involves storing seeds, embryonic axes or tissue-cultured shoot tips at ultra-low temperatures, usually in liquid nitrogen (-196°C) or its vapour (-130 to -192°C).

'Survive and Thrive' project – ACT plants

A current project that demonstrates the work undertaken by the ANBG and NSB, and includes NPA ACT as a partner, is 'Survive and Thrive' (*NPA Bulletin* March 2022). The project aims to secure threatened plant species from Australia's south-eastern subalpine regions that were severely damaged by the 2019–20 bushfires, particularly in Namadgi, Kosciuszko and Alpine national parks. Led by the National Parks Conservation Trust, partners include ANBG, World Wide Fund for Nature Australia, Australian

Alps National Parks Cooperative Management Program, ACT Government Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, and NSW Government Planning, Industry and Environment.

The goal of the project is to secure five priority native plant species:

1. Namadgi Tea Tree (*Leptospermum namadgiense* Lyne; Myrtaceae)
2. Slender Parrot Pea (*Almaleea capitata* (J.H.Willis) Crisp & P.H.Weston; Fabaceae)
3. Dwarf Violet (*Viola improcera* L.G.Adams; Violaceae)
4. a daisy bush (*Olearia* sp. *Rhizomatica* (I.R.Telford 11549) Australian National Herbarium; Asteraceae)
5. Shiny Phebalium (*Leionema lamprophyllum* subsp. *obovatum* F.M.Anderson; Rutaceae)

These species were also selected because we know nothing of their germination and propagation requirements, they are not currently part of any other *ex situ* conservation efforts or research, and the quantity and quality of seed available in the wild is known to be challenging.

In 2021–22, 35 field trips to 20 subalpine locations were undertaken to locate populations of these species and, where sustainable, make collections of seed and cuttings. To date we have reached seed collection targets for all but the Slender Parrot Pea and have confirmed that seeds are healthy and viable. This means we have enough seeds to bank collections for long-term conservation and to investigate seed biology and germination cues. Research is now underway to unravel seed germination strategies and dormancy mechanisms. In the case of the Slender Parrot Pea, for which we have no seed, initial experiments into

propagation via tissue culture are delivering promising results. Meanwhile, 25 Slender Parrot Pea plants are flowering in the ANBG Nursery giving promise that seed can be collected and banked in the future.

Further collecting of seed and plant cuttings is underway for 2022–23 and we are developing fact sheets to publish our research findings, to help inform future recovery efforts. NPA ACT members can get involved in the 'Survive and Thrive' project by contributing location and phenology information about target species to ACT Nature Map canberra.naturemapr.org/species/lists/48 which will help ANBG locate more plants or populations.



Proposed new Seed Bank building. Photo supplied

Bogong Moths return to Mount Gingera

After a near-death experience following years of drought, the Bogong Moth population appears to be recovering from its lowest point in 2017, aided by the La Niña rains of more recent times. While the moth was, in 2021, listed as endangered on the global red list of threatened species, scientists who collect data on Bogong Moth populations have reported to the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) that numbers bounced back during the 2022 season.

In the ACT, atop Mount Gingera in Namadgi National Park, the number of moths had returned to levels similar to those before the most recent drought, according to Peter Caley, a CSIRO researcher. 'That it has taken three years of record-breaking rains for the moth's numbers to recover to pre-drought levels, speaks to how low the population must have fallen,' Dr Caley said.



Bogong Moth. Photo supplied
Wikimedia Commons

Similar increases in moth numbers have been noted in the Victorian Alps. Prof. Eric Warrant, who leads a team of researchers collecting light-trap data on moth numbers, expressed cautious optimism that the population was recovering.

The Guardian <https://bit.ly/3kxP0Nn>

Sharp rise in feral horse numbers in Snowy Mountains

The Invasive Species Council (ISC) is concerned by the 27 January announcement from the NSW government that there has been a 30 per cent increase in the number of feral horses degrading and trashing the Snowy Mountains. This is despite a year of action under the government's 2021 management plan which aims to reduce feral horse numbers to 3,000 by 2027.

The government survey of wild horse populations in Kosciuszko National Park (KNP), using best practice scientific methods, found that the feral horse population has increased from 14,380 in Spring 2020 to 18,814 in Spring 2022. Some 859 feral horses were removed from KNP in 2022.

'This alarming rise in feral horses should be a red flag for those in the government who care about the environment,' said ISC advocacy manager Jack Gough.

ISC <https://bit.ly/3JoYMf1>

Revamp of Mount Kosciuszko summit area

NSW NPWS and its contractors are currently undertaking a complete revamp of the summit area of Mount Kosciuszko and the



Temporary platforms, Kosciuszko
summit. Photo by Mike Bremers

track to it from Rawson Pass. Public access to the summit, subject to time restrictions, is via a temporary 200 m long metal staircase and associated platforms.

NSW NPWS <https://bit.ly/3XInETp>

Uluru's Mala wallaby population now stable

Parks Australia staff have worked with Indigenous rangers and Anangu traditional owners near Uluru to help save the Mala (Rufous Hare-wallaby) from extinction. Parks Australia says the Uluru Mala population is now stable at 300 thanks to collaboration between six separate reserves, which helped prevent its extinction. By 1991 Mala were wiped out in the wild by feral cats, foxes and wildfire, then reintroduced to Uluru in a 2-square-kilometre cat-proof fenced enclosure more than a decade later. The 24 Mala released in 2005 have now multiplied to 300.

ABC News <https://bit.ly/3ZuU9Wk>

Scientists hopeful for Kangaroo Island Dunnart

Conservationists are feeling hopeful for the future of the endangered Kangaroo Island Dunnart for the first time since the 2019–20 Black Summer fires after a large increase in detections of the species within the feral-predator-free Western River Refuge. After the fires, which burnt about 49 per cent of the island, Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC), Kangaroo Island Land for Wildlife and local landholders constructed an 8.8 km long feral-pest exclusion fence in the Western River area to protect some of Australia's most endangered mammals, including the small carnivorous dunnart, from feral cats.

Camera traps set up in the safe-haven to monitor the dunnart population have recorded a spike in dunnart camera activity, particularly during August 2022 when there was a six-fold increase in detections, the highest rate in three years. AWC contract wildlife ecologist Pat Hodgins said the spike in detections is likely due to a breeding boom and, in turn, a population increase.

AWC <https://bit.ly/3W3eOhd>

Concern over proposed high-country logging

Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) has expressed 'deep concern' about the effects of proposed logging in the high country between the Mount Stirling Alpine Resort and the Alpine National Park on the threatened wildlife that depend on these forests. VicForests has flagged logging in the region where no Immediate Protection Areas (IPAs) have been declared.

VNPA says its concerns have been exacerbated by recent Supreme Court findings that VicForests has failed to adequately locate and protect threatened species and their habitat before and during logging. At least 11 areas are listed on the VicForests logging schedule.

There are at least seven threatened plants and seven threatened animals within the Stirling-Alpine link area alone. Some are listed state-wide under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*, or federally under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, with some appearing on both.

VNPA <https://vnpa.org.au/logging-mount-stirling/>



Upper Swan River. Photo by Mike Bremers

Revegetation program for Perth rivers

Perth's iconic rivers will benefit from a major revegetation program to improve conditions along the foreshore. The Swan Canning Riverpark Urban Forest program is a \$3m election commitment from the WA Government to support projects led by local and state government land managers.

The Riverpark covers more than 7,200 hectares of river reserve and adjoining public land, which includes the Swan, Canning, Helena and Southern rivers.

WA Department of Environment, Conservation and Attractions <https://bit.ly/3QB0KKQ>

England's national parks face funding crisis

England's national parks are facing a funding crisis that is forcing them, in order to balance their budgets, to make plans to close visitor centres, make park rangers redundant, stop maintaining paths and introduce other cuts, according to the latest figures.

Funding has fallen by 40 per cent in real terms over the past decade, and grants are expected to flatline until 2025 despite rising wage bills and costs. Government funding for national parks has been frozen since last year. Data compiled by National Parks England suggest the country's 10 park authorities will have to make cuts of £16m over the next 3 years.

The Guardian <http://bit.ly/3XmASEG>

Call for deer to be classified as pests in Victoria and Tasmania

The Invasive Species Council is pushing for deer to be classified as pests in Victoria and Tasmania, which are the only Australian jurisdictions where deer are legally protected as game animals for hunting. Landowners can kill deer on their own properties and authorities can go on to public land and cull them. However, not classifying deer as a pest creates a conflicting message about whether they can be culled, the council says.

The National Feral Deer Action Plan, being developed by a working group and backed by the federal government, estimates there are up to 2 million wild deer in Australia, up from around 50,000 in 1980.

Canberra Times <http://bit.ly/3ZAFqhr>

Alpine 'poo scourge' causing problems

New research published in *The Conversation* has explored the issue of visitors leaving poo piles in the Australian Alps, to find out how to better protect these wild areas from this practice. The researchers surveyed backcountry visitors to Kosciuszko National Park and found a minority were carrying out their waste from overnight trips, as is recommended.



Guthega Valley winter camping. Photo by Brian Slee

To combat the alpine poo scourge, they recommend building more toilets in strategic locations, making their location readily known, and giving out poo transport bags at entry points and gear shops.

Their survey of 258 visitors found that carrying out poo in biodegradable bags or a home-made poo tube is not hugely popular. They recommend a two-pronged approach: better communication and targeted infrastructure at entry points. They also urge more and improved toilets, and bins, at key locations, to make it as easy as possible for visitors to do the right thing with their poo. Authorities should also make these locations clearly known on visitor maps and online, as well as making biodegradable bags or poo tubes available at entry points, information centres and gear shops.

The Conversation <http://bit.ly/3XvgUaW>

NSW Government seeks to use offsets for dam-raising project

The NSW Government has proposed using the management of its own national parks estate to offset environmental damage caused by raising the Warragamba Dam wall. State environment officials have also reiterated their view that the project would have a significant effect on biodiversity and Aboriginal cultural heritage values within the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and their preference 'is that these impacts do not occur'.

In a new submission, officials in the planning and environment department's environment and heritage group wrote that WaterNSW had failed to properly assess the downstream environmental effects of a proposal to raise the wall by up to 17 m. Heritage NSW also wrote that the project would 'result in impacts to highly significant' Aboriginal cultural heritage sites and values, the loss of which could not be compensated for through offsetting.

In the same submission, environment officials said they supported a proposal from WaterNSW to use 'on-park biodiversity management actions' to offset some of the upstream environmental damage caused by holding flood waters inside the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. The proposal would involve conservation work within the national park areas of the Blue Mountains.

The Guardian <http://bit.ly/3CSD9j6>

Endangered whipbird rediscovered in South Australian conservation park

An endangered White-bellied Whipbird thought to have been extinct in the region has been rediscovered at Ngarkat Conservation Park in South Australia's Murray Mallee. A team of researchers from Victoria's La Trobe University and community volunteers discovered the whipbird which was presumed extinct after catastrophic wildfires across the region in 2014.

The discovery was made as part of an extensive 30-day field survey. Data collected by the survey have increased understanding of the distribution of 10 key species within the mallee's endangered bird community and will directly inform future management efforts to protect and recover these threatened species.

The geographical area known to contain these species has also been selected as one of Australia's '20 Priority Places' under the Commonwealth 2022–2032 Threatened Species Action Plan. The survey was conducted as part of the Threatened Mallee Birds project, an initiative of the Mallee Bird Conservation Action Planning Committee and BirdLife Australia.

Environment SA <http://bit.ly/3Xksupz>

Thredbo mountain-bike track now complete

The spectacular Thredbo Valley Track extension is now complete, with the final 1.5 km of new mountain-bike track opening in Kosciuszko National Park in December 2022, providing almost 40 km of world-class mountain bike track from Thredbo village to the Thredbo River picnic area. The extension was possible through a \$9.8m NSW Government investment.

The Thredbo Valley Track will also connect with the proposed Lake Jindabyne Shared Trail Project, providing a significant link in the



New track. Photo by Boen Ferguson

trail from Jindabyne to Creel Bay. It was funded by the Regional Growth – Environment and Tourism Fund and is part of the NSW Government's \$450m investment in visitor infrastructure for NSW national parks.

NSW Environment <http://bit.ly/3CSPEv0>

Scientists discover unusual bush tomato in Northern Territory national park

A group of scientists on a nature walk in the Judbarra/Gregory National Park, located 360 km south of Darwin, recently discovered an unusual bush tomato with ladder-like features. The bush tomato was low-growing and had dozens of unique right-angle spines below each flower. Its ladder-like appearance inspired its scientific name, *Solanum scalarium*.

One of the group, Peter Jobson, who was formerly the chief botanist of the Northern Territory, said 'Garrarnawun Bush Tomato' was suggested as the common name for the new species, in recognition of the Garrarnawun Lookout near where the plant was discovered.

In their paper, published in December 2022 in plant journal *PhytoKeys*, the authors said the naming served as a tool to highlight 'the importance of building community around natural spaces'. The vast Judbarra/Gregory National Park is recognised as a botanically rich area, meaning there are potentially hundreds of species yet to be formally identified.

ABC News <https://bit.ly/3X1LTvz>

VNPA slams salvage logging in national park

Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) is working with Southern Dandenongs Landcare to run habitat value surveys in areas of the Dandenong Ranges National Park proposed for logging, to make sure both Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMV) and VicForests will not log habitat in the park.

VNPA says salvage logging parts of the park, one of the most popular and oldest in the state, by FFMV is unprecedented and will remove the least flammable parts of the storm-affected forest under the guise of fire management and storm clean-up.

Threatened and vulnerable native wildlife desperately need habitat in forests recovering from storm events. Yellow-bellied and Greater Gliders, Powerful and Sooty Owls all have records in and adjacent to the proposed logging operations.

VNPA says it appears FFMV is using fire management legislation to override national park and conservation laws to enable VicForests to take habitat out of the national park to feed pulp and timber contracts.

VNPA <https://bit.ly/3k8Y4Ie>

Urgent action call on national parks

Welcoming the announced adoption of the UN's Global Biodiversity Framework in December, the National Parks Association of NSW urged the NSW Government to get moving on creating new national parks.

With the Commonwealth announcing in 2021 that Australia would protect a minimum of 30 per cent of its land and seas for biodiversity conservation by 2030, the release of the UN's Global Biodiversity Framework put '30 by 30' front and centre on the international stage,' said NPA NSW president Dr Grahame Douglas.

'NSW needs a Reserve Establishment Plan to guide the creation of next generation of protected areas. While that plan is being developed there are 'low-hanging fruit' ripe for immediate implementation, foremost of which are protecting all public native forests from logging and declaring two new national parks in core Koala habitat, the Great Koala National Park near Coffs Harbour and the upper Georges River National Park in Sydney's southwest.'

NPA NSW <http://bit.ly/3W1xpug>

Giant cane toad found in national park

Rangers working in the Conway National Park near Airlie Beach in North Queensland in January

discovered a giant cane toad weighing 2.7 kg and measuring 25 cm long. The toad was next to a hiking track. Ranger Kylee Gray said it was by far the largest toad she had encountered. According to Guinness World Records, the largest known toad weighed in at 2.65 kg in 1991.



Giant cane toad. Photo by Queensland Department of Environment and Science

ABC News <http://bit.ly/3QUsh0i>

Kangaroo Island in New York Times top 10 travel destinations for 2023

Kangaroo Island has been named as one of the *New York Times*' top 10 travel destinations [ranked 7th] for 2023. It is a huge endorsement for the island which was devastated by widespread bushfires during the summer of 2019–20. National parks and conservation areas form over a third of the area on Australia's third largest island.

Writer Beshia Rodell says Kangaroo Island is known for its 'incredible wildlife, breathtaking ocean views and its status as an ecological haven – like a zoo without fences'. The only other Australian destination to feature was Uluru–Kata Tjuta National Park which ranked 29th of 52 on the list.

SA Department of Environment and Water <http://bit.ly/3D3p0Qc>

Compiled by Allan Sharp

NPA bulletin board

NPA ACT welcomes the following new members:

- Jan Febey & partner
- Virginia Buring
- Helen Cross
- Julia Newton-Howes
- Aldyth Mackay
- David Ingold
- Gavin Smith, Rebecca Williamson Smith & family
- Margaret Strong
- Hannah Gerke & Sarin Tiatragul
- Molly Saunders
- Andrew Howie, Kathryn Hooton & family
- Cathy Bergen & Ross Crossman
- Caroline & Robert Tulip
- Julie Matthews
- Terence Gras
- Beatrice Brickhill
- Beryl & Andrew Bettell
- Amy Brooks

We look forward to seeing you at NPA activities

NPA ACT's monthly e-bulletin, *Burning Issues*, marked its 20th anniversary in February

Burning Issues was initiated as a brief reminder to members about NPA's monthly meetings and work parties and for keeping people informed on Namadgi restoration projects after the 2003 fires.

As first editor, Judy Kelly also used it to brief members on conservation matters in areas close to the ACT and to garner support for campaigns such as against feral horses in Kosciuszko National Park and woodchip logging in the South East Forests.

'It was a simple, unsophisticated layout which I'd send after attending the monthly management committee and discussing content with the committee' Judy recalls. 'The idea was spurred on when we heard that NPA NSW's Sydney branch had substantially increased attendances at its monthly meetings after emailing a newsletter in the week before meetings.

'I think Chris Emery suggested *Burning Issues* as a name which was appropriate after the 2003 fires when people were keen to help with restoration,' Judy said. Chris went on to edit *Burning Issues* between 2009 and 2020.

President Rosemary Hollow said that 20 years on, *Burning Issues* continues to be an important monthly update for members and supporters. 'We owe a huge thanks to all our editors for their work on producing and circulating the newsletter. I've appreciated the work of recent editor, Cynthia Burton, and am pleased to welcome the new editor, Marie Santsingh,' she said.



Marie Santsingh

Extra NPA Bulletin pages available online

Since the June 2020 *Bulletin*, the printed edition has been supplemented online with extra pages containing additional text or photos or enlarged photos, summarised in the table. See [Quarterly NPA Bulletins \(npaact.org.au\)](#).

In the current printed edition, a note at the end of an item indicates that there is extra content online.

NPA Bulletin December 2022, page 4, corrigendum:

Top right photo caption, amend to read "Tor, Jennifer, Hugh and Alison".

Edition	Extra pages
Jun 2020	3
Sep 2020	4
Dec 2020	5
Mar 2021	2
Jun 2021	4
Sep 2021	0
Dec 2021	7
Mar 2022	1
Jun 2022	4
Sep 2022	4
Dec 2022	7



Canberra and Region Heritage Festival

is celebrating its 40th year with 3 weeks of activities from **11–30 April** around the theme *Sharing Stories*.

NPA ACT will again be participating. Rosemary Hollow will be sharing stories of the plants and sculptures in a walk around Parliament House native gardens. Under the NPA banner, Ngunnawal/Kamilaroi man Aaron Chatfield will talk about native bush foods and animals in a walk at Mulligans Flat.

The program will be released on 16 March. Register via the Heritage Festival website. We will share links on NPA's social media sites, including [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

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 the secretary at secretary@npaact.org.au by the end of April signed by yourself and another member who seconds the nomination.

Further information on what can be put into the written nomination can be found on the [NPA website](#) or by contacting Rod Griffiths at environment@npaact.org.au or 0410 875 731.



Field Guide to the Native Trees of the ACT

The third edition of the *Field Guide* was reprinted in February 2023. It contains minor changes to the text and six new tree photographs.

The *Field Guide* and other NPA publications are available from the Australian National Botanic Gardens book shop.

General meetings

conservation education protection

Starting in February the general meetings will be held on the third Thursday of the month at **Weston Creek Uniting Church hall, 16 Parkinson Street, Weston, at 7:30 pm**

Thursday 16 March

Microbats and flying foxes – rescue, care and release of injured bats in the ACT

Clare Wynter

ACT Wildlife flying-fox coordinator

ACT Wildlife is Canberra's only multi-species wildlife care group that rescues, rehabilitates and releases native animals. Clare will talk about the variety of bat species in the ACT and how members care for and release microbats and flying foxes, including raising orphaned pups.



Orphaned grey-headed flying-fox, at 12 weeks, enjoying blossom. Photo supplied

Thursday 20 April

The Conservation Council in 2023 and beyond

Elle Lawless

*Executive Director,
Conservation Council ACT Region*

Elle is an experienced campaigner with many years of experience working in environmental advocacy. She will speak about her vision and plans for the Conservation Council across the ACT region.

More for your calendar	March	April	May	June
Committee meetings (5:30 pm to 7:00 pm)	Thursday 2 nd	Thursday 6 th	Thursday 4 th	Thursday 1 st

National Parks Association of the ACT Incorporated (Inaugurated 1960)

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.

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.

Office-bearers

President
Vice President
Secretary
Treasurer

Rosemary Hollow
<vacant>
Tor Wilson
Jan Gatenby

Committee members

Immediate Past President
Public Officer & Membership Liaison
Minutes Secretary

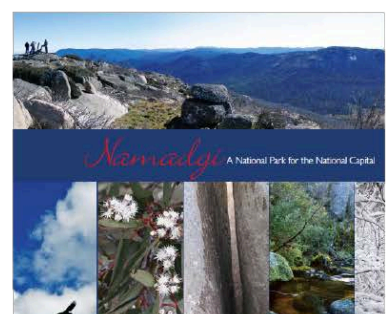
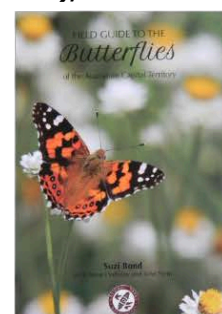
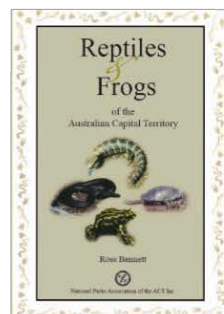
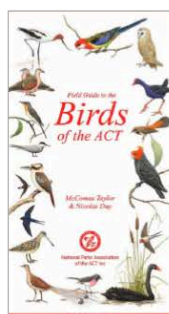
Esther Gallant
Jennifer Carter
Viv Schweizer
Mike Bremers
Hugh Coppell
Alison Russell-French
Rod Griffiths
Allan Sharp
Maisie Walker Stelling

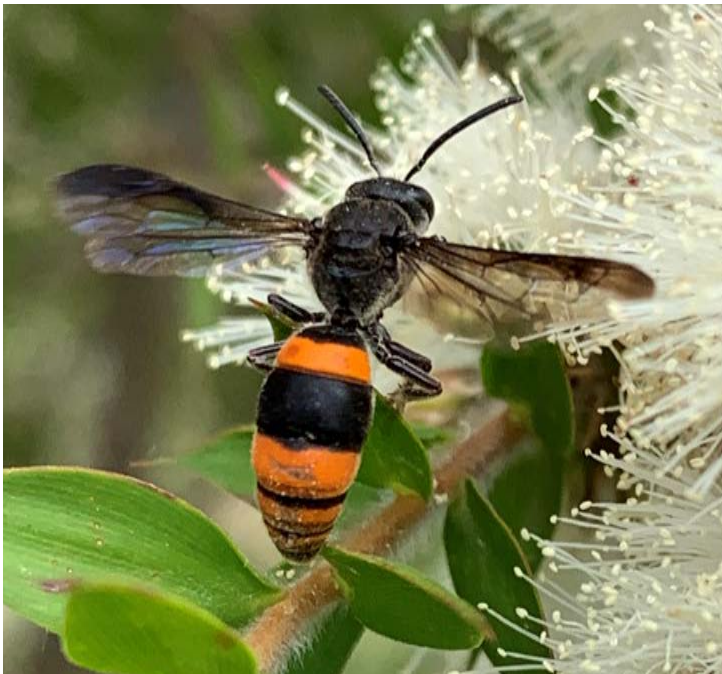
Conveners

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

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

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

