

NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF THE ACT INC.

GENERAL MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, 18 April 2019

Uniting Church Hall, Scrivener St, O'Connor

1. Welcome and apologies

President Esther Gallant welcomed members, especially Life Members, and guests to the meeting. Esther paid respects to the traditional custodians of the land and their elders past and present.

Approximately 25 members and guests were present, with apologies received from Cynthia Burton, Rod Griffiths, John Brickhill, Isobel Crawford, Chris Emery & Sabine Friedrich, Judy & Dave Kelly.

2. Confirmation of the minutes of the 21 March 2019 meeting

The minutes are available online through the web link provided in the latest *Burning Issues* and a printed copy could be perused before the meeting. They were approved as written. There were no matters arising.

3. NPA activities

Esther reported on the following activities:

- The Members' Forum on 6 April organised by the 60th Anniversary Subcommittee and led by Cynthia Burton went off very well. The keynote speaker, Brett McNamara, spoke about the changed context in which the caretakers of national parks work today – they have to mainly focus on managing people and their needs, including politicians, the visiting public and various other stakeholders. But they still look after the natural values of parks, promote the cultural heritage and support the public in engaging with nature in various new ways, e.g. through apps or physical endurance events. Unfortunately, there is not much understanding in the wider community of the relevance of national parks and nature reserves to their lives.
- Megan Rowlatt and Naomi Edwards from Intrepid Landcare outlined the origin and approach of their organisation. They focus on bringing young people into Landcare by linking them to older volunteers to share the benefits to health, connecting to nature and making a positive contribution to the environment.
- The forum participants were broken up into groups to discuss strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats affecting the NPA ACT. In the second half of the forum the groups had a brainstorming session to shape some key aims and actions for the future of NPA ACT.
- Cynthia has written up a comprehensive report on the forum that will be published in the *NPA Bulletin* and on the website.
- Esther warmly thanked Cynthia and her helpers, especially Annette Smith and Deidre Shaw for catering, and the participants from outside of NPA (CBC, BBC, Change.350, ANU Environmental Collective, the coordinators of Reclaim Kosci) and especially Graeme Worboys for attending, and contributing to, the forum.
- NPA ACT-sponsored Reclaim Kosci activities: Di Thompson and Esther are organising a Tantangara tour of feral horse damage on 3 May. Up to 35 MLAs and staff have accepted the invitation to go on a road trip to Long Plain and beyond. The invitation extended to the Environment Directorate and Icon Water officials. The Reclaim Kosci coordinators are providing logistical assistance with this tour.
- An extremely generous member donation has made it possible to offer Minister Gentleman and 2-3 others a shorter helicopter tour on which Geoff Hope will be providing scientific commentary on areas he has studied.

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- The feral horse petition has received well over 10,000 signatures.
- Esther reminded members that Kosciuszko National Park was created 75 years ago on 19 April to protect the alpine area from damaging cattle grazing.
- Clive Hurlstone informed the meeting that the Environment Subcommittee is writing a submission to the ACT Woodlands strategy and studying the maps of fuel-reduction sites in response to the preliminary call for suggestions and queries before 26 April.

4.0 Other business

- Ross Kingsland reported that the Red Hill development has been refused, but a re-assessment is still a possibility.
- Max Lawrence mentioned the recent passing of long-time member David Large who had made contributions to the walks program, the Management Committee and the Environment Subcommittee over the years. A Namadgi walk in his honour is being organised for 8 September.

5. Presentation

Kevin introduced Jason Dobry, PhD candidate from University of Canberra, whose presentation was titled *Rosenberg's genetic pool*. Jason explained that he has always been interested in reptiles, catching rattlesnakes as a kid in Washington State where he grew up. In his various occupations since leaving school he has learnt how to isolate mitochondrial DNA from blood samples to look at lineages and how populations deviate from one another, for example.

He explained that there is a debate about where Varanids originated: Laurasia where there is a fossil record going back 70 million years or Gondwanaland without fossils but a great variety in size and number of species.

The two monitors in the ACT, *Varanus rosenbergi* and *V. varius*, are active predators and have probably been taxonomically confused for a long time.

In his work Jason is endeavouring to take blood and/or tissue samples from all monitors caught in the Namadgi citizen-science Rosenberg's project to:

- develop the DNA sequencing of all individuals
- determine the relatedness of individuals
- do a genome subtraction
- isolate the W chromosome sequences.

As an interesting aside Jason explained that monitor females can lay eggs without male participation and that all the offspring thereof turn out to be male individuals.

The presentation was followed by questions from the rather overwhelmed audience at its 9.15 pm conclusion. Jason was thanked by acclamation.

Esther presented Jason with a copy of NPA's Namadgi book and invited everyone to join in a light supper.

President:

Date: