

NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF THE ACT INC.

GENERAL MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, 15 July 2021

Uniting Church Hall, Scrivener Street, O'Connor

1. Welcome and apologies

President Esther Gallant welcomed to the meeting 25 members and guests who had braved the cold rainy evening. She paid respects to the traditional custodians of the land and their elders past and present.

Apologies were received from Stefan de Montis, Cynthia Burton, Debbie Worner, Chris Emery & Sabine Friedrich, Don Fletcher.

2. Current activities

Esther confirmed an NPA grant proposal was submitted to the Landcare Recovery Fund; NPA is awaiting their decision. A possible collaboration between the ANBG Seed Bank and NPA members would involve locating rare plants in Namadgi National Park; further details to follow.

She reminded members that entries to the NPA members' photo exhibition close on 31 August.

3. Presentation

Esther welcomed Rainer Rehwinkel, grasslands ecologist, member of the Friends of Grasslands and formerly employed by ACT Parks, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and the NSW Environment Department. Rainer presented an illustrated talk to NPA members on:

Threats to critically endangered grasslands and grassy woodlands in Lawson North - what can we do?

Rainer has worked on nearly every aspect of conservation of grassy ecosystems and joined the ACT Conservation Council's North Lawson Grasslands campaign to help lobby for the conservation of the grasslands from development by Defence Housing. Rainer explained that the values of this area lie in the number of threatened or declining flora and fauna species that have been recorded in or near the ecological communities Box-Gum Woodlands and Natural Temperate Grasslands of the former Belconnen Naval Station in Lawson. The site has extensive grasslands and patches of woodland.

The Lawson natural temperate grasslands are critically endangered; from the former area of 0.5 million hectares in SE NSW less than 1% is protected in conservation reserves and the rest is gravely threatened by agricultural, infrastructure and urban development. Box-Gum grassy woodlands used to cover extensive areas of SE Australia, but there is very little left of this ecological community. They have hollow-bearing trees and diverse ground layers.

The most important threatened faunal and floral species in these forb-rich grasslands and grassy woodlands are:

- Golden Sun Moth, an indicator of undisturbed grassland; a maximum of 500 individuals have been counted over about 120 ha which is one of the larger remaining populations in the ACT;
- Perunga Grasshopper, Canberra Raspy Cricket and Key's Matchstick: restricted grassland specialists;
- Striped Legless Lizard, Canberra Grassland Earless Dragon;
- Superb Parrot, Latham's Snipe, Gang-gang Cockatoo, Little Eagle, Scarlet Robin, White-winged Triller, Dusky Woodswallow, White-fronted Chat;
- Ginninderra Peppercross (Endemic to the ACT, North Lawson is its 'type locality'), Small Purple Pea, Hoary Sunray.

Declining floral species are Nodding Chocolate Lily, Common Bulbine-lily, Blue Devil, Emu-foot, Heathy Bush-pea, Early Nancy, Creamy Candles, Lemon Beautyheads among others.

Rainer acknowledged that cultural burns by the Aboriginal population over more than 13,000 years had led to today's grasslands in many cases and suggested that the present-day Australian landscape might flourish and recover with the re-introduction of Indigenous burning practices.

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He also acknowledged the Conservation Council's Helen Oakey, Will Osborne and many photographers whose photos were used in his presentation.

At the end of his richly illustrated presentation Rainer urged the meeting to sign the petition on the Conservation Council's website, and he also collected signatures at the meeting's venue. The petition will be sent to Federal Environment Minister Sussan Ley.

Esther thanked Rainer and closed the official meeting at about 20:30. He was presented with a copy of NPA's *Field Guide to the Orchids of the ACT*.

Discussions in small groups with the speaker continued for some time afterwards.

Note: A short summary article on Rainer's presentation will be printed in the September *NPA Bulletin*.

Annual general meeting: Thursday, 19 August 2021 at 19:30

Chair: Date: