Tree book launched

Fire management issues

Changes at Tidbinbilla
NPA BULLETIN  Volume 44 number 4  December 2007

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Articles by contributors may not necessarily reflect association opinion or objectives.

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.

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Cover Photo: Corang Arch in the Budawangs. See walk
story page 15.  Photo Philip Gatesby
From the President

Finally, after four and a half years of seeing the yellow and red tags flutter along Orroral Ridge, Jon Stanhope announced on September 12 that the Orroral Ridge fire trail would not be built. It was a huge relief to hear this from the Chief Minister himself (check out the announcement on our website) and to hear that the Stockyard Link would be a modified, much smaller track. In addition, the fire trail at the southern end of the park, known as Spencers, was put on hold for a year to see if some arrangement could be worked out whereby the existing fire trail over the fence in NSW could be restored to use by the ACT. Of the four originally proposed, only Bullen fire trail will go ahead in its original form and we have accepted that, as it is at the heart of the urban/rural interface.

We should all be proud of our efforts to get this result; the Chief Minister made clear Orroral’s Aboriginal heritage and its environmental and ecological values were significant, but also “strong community opposition” had tipped the balance against the fire trail. However, we need to keep an eye on the larger picture because there is no doubt there are still some hard decisions ahead of us as a community in planning for fire management in the ACT and surrounding areas (see articles pp 6-9). An effective, sustainable fire management plan is our only guarantee that trails will not be built in the wrong places.

Your new executive committee has settled in very well and we are looking forward to a productive year ahead. The 2008 symposium will be our biggest event but we are also planning in earnest for our 50th anniversary in 2010. Dig out your old photos, write up old memories and let Judy Kelly have them to put in the special Bulletin we will be putting out.

Committee members have been busy in other areas as well. National Parks Australia Council met in Brisbane in September; Anne Reeves is Acting President, Kevin McCue was elected Treasurer, and I was elected Secretary, so we will be able to contribute to the agenda of NPAC quite significantly in what promises to be a very interesting year ahead nationally. We discussed issues such as tourism in parks, fire management, water catchment issues, alpine parks, and offshore islands. We also met with the new executive officer for the Australian Alpine National Parks, Rod Atkins, who is now based in the ACT, which again gives us an opportunity to get more involved with the alpine parks with National Heritage listing perhaps ready by this time next year.

We have put a submission in to the ACT Government budget process, asking for more spending in the park on capital improvements, money to manage the Corin Forest/Paddy’s River area and more research funds to monitor plant and animal response to climate change. With the next local elections due in late 2008 we will be interested to see what provision is made for addressing the problems climate change is already bringing to our national park and nature reserves.

Thanks to Sonja Lenz for editing this issue of the Bulletin, thus joining the “rolling” group of editors.

Hope to catch up with you all at our Christmas party (reminder below) and have a safe and happy summer.

Christine Goonrey

NPA Reminder notices

Sunday, 9 December Blue Range Hut from 11.30am
Blue Range Hut picnic area, in the “Uriarra Forest” is on the Blue Range Road which is a right turn off the Brindabella Road some 5km past the Uriarra Homestead.

The usual Christmas Party features: bring your own picnic lunch (BBQ facilities available) and Christmas cheer. Nibbles, Christmas cake and some drinks will be provided.

Bring along good-quality, pre-loved items to be auctioned off as a fundraiser for your NPA.
If you need a lift, please contact a member of the committee (see page 2 of the Bulletin).

The Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group’s December combined work and Christmas party is on Saturday, 8 December

Get out and about capturing your submissions for the calendar photography competition. See September 2007 Bulletin for details.

Walking in Namadgi
Entries close on Friday 29 February 2008.

NPA ACT Symposium Corridors for survival in a changing world.
Friday and Saturday 9 and 10 May 2008 at the CSIRO Discovery Centre.
This symposium will cover issues of climate change for the ACT and wider region. Program, speakers and timetable will be published on the NPA website (www.npaact.org.au) as they are finalised.
More information can be obtained from the convener Kevin McCue (ph: 6251 1291 or email kmccue@grapevine.com.au).

More details for all these items are on the NPA website: www.npaact.org.au

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NPA News

NPA ACT’s 50th Anniversary Bulletin, March 2010

Members are invited to start thinking, stirring their creative juices and jotting down their recollections of NPA for the 50th anniversary Bulletin in 2010:

Fifty years on: NPA ACT reflects.

A brief outline of the association’s early history will be followed by sections such as the following:

- Reminiscences, old and new: the reminiscences could include jottings about people’s activities and involvement with NPA that bring them and the association to life; memorable walks or outings; sighting a plant, animal, bird or insect that you hadn’t seen before, or that is now rare, or that struck you as quirkish, beautiful, or unusual; a humorous incident; an early account of Nancy Burbidge’s Black Mountain walks; perhaps an account of an outing to Mt Burbidge or a place you regard as special; a survey marker or line;
- Memories of park staff: do people have memories of staff past (1960s onwards) and present at Gudgenby Nature Reserve and Namadgi Visitor Centre?
- Educational: displays for ACT schools and NPA essay competitions; what has happened to essay winners? Anecdotes about the NPA display now under Adrienne’s care;
- Publications: the history of our publications and the part played by our benefactor, Alastair Morrison;
- The Bulletin: from birth to 50, the story of the Bulletin’s development;
- Work parties: past—eg, Budawangs walking tracks; present—post-fire work parties; an update on Bobyram regeneration area; Cotter catchment;
- What has happened since the 40th anniversary: NPA ACT’s continuing relevance; production of Caring for Namadgi; formulation of NPA’s policies; revised Plan of Management for Namadgi; fire management and fire trails; submissions; educating our politicians and the public; our symposium in 2006 (and 2008);
- Presidents’ perspectives: a selection of presidential perspectives;
- Archival snippets: snippets from the archives;
- Beautiful photos: black and white as well as colour;
- Poetry: some of our poets are identified. Any closet poets with a gem about Namadgi?
- Sketches, etchings, linocuts, drawings or paintings of Namadgi: could be scanned and reproduced in the anniversary Bulletin.

A contribution could be one paragraph, or one page. Although 2010 might seem far away, we need to start preparing now and have enough time to select, edit, and liaise.

Please email contributions to judy.kelly@tpg.com.au or post contributions to: 50th Anniversary Bulletin, NPA ACT, GPO Box 544, Canberra ACT 2601.

If you would like to help research, gather material, or coordinate any of the sections, please let me know.

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Work party round-up

Work parties have long been a central part of NPA activities and 2007 was no exception.

During the year, 10 work parties were programmed with two being postponed due to inclement weather. At the time of writing, two were still in the offing. Our activities this year have covered territory from the lower Cotter catchment south to Naas Creek including the Brindabella Range, and Honeysuckle Creek and Smokers Gap areas in between. The following figures to date may be of interest:

- 24 person days of effort expended;
- 100 briars removed;
- 2330 wilding pines removed;
- 85 other exotic species removed;
- two 4WD ute-loads of rubbish removed; and
- 5km of walking track maintained and cleared of encroaching vegetation.

In 2008 I expect our cooperation with Parks, Conservation and Lands (PCL) to continue and our work party program to do likewise. Additionally, I am currently discussing possible work party activities with the Queanbeyan Area of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service with a view to assisting with some of the many new nature reserves to our east.

(See arboretum photo page 19).

Martin Chalk
Volunteer Coordinator

Vale Kaye Campbell

NPA ACT member Kaye Campbell died on 3 October 2007.

Kaye was one of the association’s dedicated volunteers who assisted in our Chifley office from September 2001 to September 2004.

Kaye, with Leonie Bubb helping out with membership renewals, recorded the correspondence and expertly handled the sometimes complex process of membership renewals and donation receipts. Part of the dedication was putting up with the spartan office conditions. If there was a problem Kaye would leave Clive Hurstion a message in the desk diary for him to make a decision, but this was infrequent. With Kaye and Leonie in the office he had complete confidence that the job would be done properly.

In 2004, Kaye compiled detailed procedures for updating the NPA membership database. Her Notes for Users list every step to record renewals and new members, assemble a welcome pack, acknowledge donations, enter new members in the correspondence file and print Bulletin labels.

In May 2004, Kaye indicated that she would like another volunteer/s to share the responsibility of being office helper for a few hours, twice a month. Between June and September, Kaye organised a core of volunteers to help with what she once did all by herself.

Jenny McLeod, Kathryn Wingett and Diana Heins greatly appreciated the time Kaye took to introduce them to the office tasks. Annette Smith took over co-ordinating the NPA office volunteers.

Kaye had well deserved to stand down after her invaluable service. Her office procedures are still referred to by the current office helpers in the new Civic office.

Kaye was a regular Wednesday walker until she fell ill. In accordance with her wishes, there was no funeral or memorial service, instead donations could be made to the National Breast Cancer Foundation.

Diana Heins
NPA ACT's new tree book has arrived!

There had been talk about the need for a new edition of one of NPA's sought-after field guides for a long time, but producing one was not a straightforward task: the Field Guide to the Native Trees of the ACT needed updating as well as the addition of colour photographs and style elements to the original black and white booklet.

Clive Hurlstone took up the challenge and set about organising reviewers and an NPA working group. He managed to get some of the ACT's top tree specialists to bring the 1980s text up to date. The original text was scanned, converted back to text and then edited accordingly. Later on Clive's organisational talents and negotiation skills also made it possible to procure the latest vegetation map of the ACT as well as hard-to-come-by tree species photos.

Keep in mind that the 2003 bushfires had changed the bush so much that it was hard or impossible to find good (or photogenic) specimens of some of the rarer species.

The designer scanned the original line drawings and thumbnail maps and each scanned image then had to be processed to remove the yellowed background. NPA ACT was fortunate to have engaged a designer who is not only very imaginative but also very patient and didn't get fazed by repeated edits, and more edits, and even very, very last-minute changes.

How often did the working group think: "It's just about ready for printing" to then discover that some point that was glaringly wrong or invalid had been overlooked and needed changing — a seemingly endless process...

But then, in late winter, finally the green light to organise the launch as the book was declared complete and ready for printing! The October 23 date was chosen as it gave a time buffer of a couple of weeks more than the printers had stipulated they needed to print the book in Canberra and to have it bound and covered in Melbourne. Another working group sprung into life to organise invitations and a speaker as well as snacks and drinks for the big day.

Then disaster struck — a couple of inadmissible errors had gone through the whole process unnoticed and needed rectifying.

Ten days later a trial print run shows that the colour blue has to be toned down — a few more days are lost.

Finally, the announcement that the printing is going ahead. But with all the lost days our time buffer is used up. Will the books be available by the day of the launch?

We are held in suspense until the 11th hour (literally!) on the 23rd when Clive turns up at the Crosbie Morrison Building at the Australian National Botanic Gardens with the first 200 bound books — the launch can go ahead without us having to resort to a "virtual book".

And what a good party we had! Thanks to Adrienne, Annette, Beverley, Christine, Judy, Margaret and Sabine for a lovely spread, and to Michael for being such an attentive and friendly barman.

Sonja Lenz

NPA's next publication will be Colin McAlister's Twelve historic sites in the Glenburn and Burbong areas of the Kowen Forest, Australian Capital Territory due in December 2007 or January 2008 — check the website or Burning Issues.

Photos by Sabine Friedrich
After the 2003 fires—fire management

With summer upon us, and another bushfire season facing the bush capital, this timely contribution from Roger Good should be mandatory reading for all Canberrans, especially those drafting and overseeing the bushfire management strategy—Ed.

Another significant coronial inquiry into the cause and impacts of a wildfire has been completed, but will bushfire suppression techniques and bushfire management planning change or improve as a response? This question has been asked many times following coronial inquiries in Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales in the 1980s and '90s and several other inquiries, notably that of the Australian Government Standing Committee on Environment and Conservation and its 1984 report Bushfires and the Australian Environment.

In many ways fire suppression planning, techniques and better equipment, together with basic training of bushfire suppression personnel, have seen better and generally more effective and efficient bushfire suppression and fire management. The statistics in all states indicate an increasing number of fire ignitions each summer with a higher percentage being suppressed and extinguished before they develop into major fire events. Unfortunately, widespread high-intensity bushfires have occurred, and will continue to occur, under high to extreme fire weather, with further severe impacts on life and property, as witnessed in the 2003 bushfires in the ACT.

While the most devastating impacts of the 2003 fires occurred in Canberra, the extreme fire behaviour that resulted in the destruction of housing was not restricted to the ACT. Prior to January 18, bushfires were burning across the Snowy and Brindabella ranges and on the Victorian high plains, as a result of lightning strikes earlier in January. Suppression activities were undertaken in all states immediately after the fire ignitions through “standard” fire incident control procedures, that were well planned and appropriate to the predicted fire weather conditions for the days following. The prevailing fire weather conditions provided for high to very high fire danger indices and potentially very high fire intensities, but the atmospheric weather factors that contributed to the extreme fire danger index and the “firestorm” on January 18 were unpredicted and probably unpredictable. This large system extended over all fire areas in the high country on January 18.

Factors in fire intensities

Many views have been expressed and with much discussion as to the factors contributing to the “firestorm” on January 18, most focused on the high fuel loads that existed in the native forests and woodlands in the national parks across the mountains, including Namadgi National Park. Unfortunately, very few discussions actually had any real knowledge of the fuel(s) complex and what the fuel loads were at the time of the fires, in terms of the fine litter fuel loads and their distribution relative to the various vegetation types, topography, elevation and aspect, all of which influence the contribution of the various fuel types to a bushfire event as well as the intensities and rates of spread that occur during the passage of a fire.

Many views have also been expressed over the past few months as to the need for more prescribed burning in Namadgi National Park and adjacent areas in Brindabella and Kosciuszko national parks in New South Wales. A call for more controlled burning (prescribed burning) has been the response to all major fire events where life and property have been impacted, but such calls are made in a very general way with little cognisance of what “more burning” really means. Certainly little or no consideration is given by the proponents of “more burning” to where, how and for what outcome the prescribed burning should be implemented across the Brindabella Range and Snowy Mountains (Namadgi, Brindabella and Kosciuszko national parks).

Any concept of prescribed burning across all the high country on a regular and frequent cycle lacks an understanding of the high country ecosystems and has no sound ecological basis.

General widespread prescribed burning for hazard fuel reduction cannot be undertaken every year if desired, due to many factors including weather patterns, the vegetation, terrain features, resources available, etc. Long-term monitoring of weather conditions in the mountains also indicates that the number of days that are appropriate for prescribed burning (ie, meet the actual prescribed conditions) is in the order of 12 to 25 a year, depending on vegetation type, aspect, location etc.

“More” is misleading

It is misleading the general community totally to infer that if “more” prescribed burning is done it will provide protection for life and property. It must be recognised that prescribed burning for fuel reduction is based on and carried out to reduce fine litter ground fuels from some presumably quantified high level to some lower, defined (prescribed) level, which is generally stated as being below 10 tonnes per hectare. This figure is based on fuels below 10 tonnes per hectare contributing lower fire intensities during a subsequent bushfire which burns over or through a previously prescribed burn area.

The basic premise is that lowered fire intensities enable direct fire fighting to be carried out with a greater capacity to control a fire and, as a consequence, provide some level of protection of life and property. The length of time (months or years) that such prescribed burning contributes to lower potential bushfire intensities depends very much on the vegetation type, its location in the landscape and whether the prescribed outcomes in terms of fuel reduction of a prescribed burn were actually met at the time of prescribed burning.

It is obvious that a knowledge of vegetation types, the fuel accumulation rates and the maximum fuel loads of each vegetation type, as well as the range of fuel loads that can occur at any one time in any one vegetation type, is essential to the sound and effective planning and implementation of prescribed burning. Without this knowledge, a general program to cover a larger area of prescribed burning as some panacea to the protection of life and property is both misleading and can engender a false sense of security with property owners.

Accumulation rates differ

First we should look at the “fuels” and fuel accumulation rates in the various mountain vegetation communities. These have been quantified from extensive fuel sampling across the major vegetation associations in the Snowy Mountains and the Brindabella Ranges over several decades. As is evident after the 2003 fires, some vegetation communities accumulate fine litter fuels rapidly following the passage of a bushfire event while other communities are very slow to recover and produce very little fuel in the same timeframe.

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As noted by a number of people over recent months, there are now communities with very high “fuel” levels but it should also be noted that these “heavy fuels” in most situations are not the fine ground litter fuel which prescribed burning aims to reduce but dense shrub and epicormic “regrowth fuels”. It is very difficult to prescribe burn for fuel reduction in vegetation where regenerating shrub understoreys and epicormic regrowth are dominant, even where such burning can be justified ecologically. These “fuels” are standing sacted fuels and burn very differently to the more compacted ground litter fuels. A number of notable attempts at prescribed burning of regenerating shrub fuels in the mountains in past years have resulted in the ignition of high-intensity fires (bushfires).

The fine litter fuel loads for the dominant vegetation communities in the mountains range from a maximum fuel load of approximately 14 tonnes per hectare in the dry woodland and forests to 70 tonnes per hectare in the higher moist forests. Just as significant though in terms of fire management planning, is the range of maximum fuel loads within any one vegetation type.

For example, in Eucalyptus delegatensis the range has been recorded as 28.5 to 69.8 tonnes per hectare in the elevation range of 1200-1400 metres, while the drier Eucalyptus pauciflora/E. dalrympleana community fuel loads range from 16.5 to 35 tonnes per hectare over an elevation range of 950-1350 metres. These two communities exist adjacent to each other and hence it is obvious that the application of prescribed burning in these two communities, if deemed necessary and could be carried out, would have to be executed under quite different prescribed weather conditions and at different times. The prescribed fire intensities appropriate to each vegetation community and their location in the landscape must be determined prior to implementing any burn program, otherwise excessive fuel reduction with unacceptable scorch of the live vegetation would result, or alternatively a prescribed fire may be self-extinguishing with little or no fuel reduction.

Strategic burning needed

If there is a need for more prescribed burning it is not for larger areas but for more strategic and carefully planned and implemented prescribed burning which accounts for both fuel reduction by percentage of an area or by reduction in tonnes per hectare over all or part of an area (burning block), as well as the ecological attributes of the various vegetation types.

In a similar context, those calling for more prescribed burning seldom have any appreciation of existing fire management programs that include strategic prescribed burning, or any cognisance of the other legislative and obligatory management issues that land management agencies are or may be required to address, eg catchment and natural area management.

These make fire management an even greater challenge in conservation reserves such as Namadgi, Brindabella and Kosciuszko national parks, as catchment stability, water quality, biodiversity, nature conservation and threatened species all have to be considered and addressed in fire management plans and programs, including prescribed burning for both ecological and fuel reduction purposes.

Field surveys and modelling of vegetation, soils, slopes, terrain features and fuel loads across the Alps National Parks, indicate that there are approximately 250 000 hectares where these slopes and soil types require more than 10 tonnes per hectare of ground litter to maintain soil stability and hence catchment stability and water quality. A conflict between prescribed burning for hazardous fuel reduction and maintenance of an adequate ground litter cover to maintain soil stability therefore exists.

To address this conflict a hazard and risk assessment must be undertaken as well as an assessment of the probability of fire ignition etc. Seddon is such a hazard and risk assessment carried out by any land management agency or fire suppression agency.

Similarly, it is to be recognised that the fine litter ground cover in the higher elevation forests and woodlands is also the source of nutrients which, through the cycle of growth, litter fall, decomposition and nutrient uptake, provide for the maintenance and growth of the very vegetation communities that contribute the litter fuels. The regular removal of this fuel through prescribed burning of the higher elevation forests reduces the nutrient base available to the vegetation and, subsequently, the capacity of the vegetation to remain a self-sustaining ecosystem.

Quantifying hazard

Part of strategic planning for prescribed burning is the actual quantification of the fuel hazard existing at any one time across the range of vegetation types and fuel complexes. Heavy ground litter fuel loads do not necessarily equate to high “hazard” levels existing in a vegetation type. Alternatively, low fuel loads (5 to 8 tonnes per hectare) often present as high or higher fire hazard, not in terms of potential bushfire intensities but in very much higher potential rates of spread of a bushfire.

This was evident in the 2003 fires which “whipped” across bare drought-ravaged agricultural lands near the Murrumbidgee River and the pine forests near Mt Stromlo. These paddocks carried virtually no fuels but supported the carriage of fire under the extreme wind conditions of January 18.

The “hazard” level varies as a factor of fuel loads but also as a factor of time and place and hence will be different under a range of weather conditions. Fire management personnel, therefore, have to make a value judgment as to what level or what range of “hazards” they are managing for — they cannot address all fire hazardous situations and certainly not the very high to extreme fire situations where unpredictable fire weather overrides all other “hazard” factors.

Legacy of problems

The Snowy Mountains and the Brindabella Ranges are part of the most important water catchment in the country. The arbitrary implementation of hazard reduction burning over more and more of the catchments would be inappropriate to the long-term stability and maintenance of catchment values as has been noted above. In fact, it has been well documented in the Snowy Mountains as having made a major detrimental impact on the catchments, actually contributing to increased fire ignition potential and soil stability problems.

The Hume Snowy Bushfire Council (HSBC) was established in the 1950s as the only area-specific Bushfire Council, to plan and implement fire management programs in the catchments of the Snowy Mountains Scheme. The organisation, made up of local community and government agency personnel, established a program of planned burning over almost 80 per cent of the Snowy Mountains, with
After the 2003 fires — fire management issues and concerns

(Continued from page 7)

burnt on January 18. Pinus radiata plantations were burnt, the majority of the area being extensive areas of pine plantation were plantations. This is very relevant to the 2003 fires where extensive areas of native forest and woodland in the foothills of Namadgi and Brindabella national parks, were not considered as contributing to the extent and severity of the 2003 fires.

High hazard rating

Pinus radiata plantations always present a high fire hazard, particularly when they exist near to the urban areas (or vice versa). This is exacerbated when plantations are immediately to the west or northwest of an urban interface where they present huge amounts of fuel to a fire moving under the prevailing northwest fire weather conditions.

Unfortunately, the most extreme combination of fuel loads and fire weather conditions came together in and over the pine plantations on January 18, contributing to the firestorm that devastated the city. Post-fire modelling of the January 17 and 18 weather features by scientists in NSW, Victoria and the ACT indicates a suite of conditions which exacerbated the extreme fire danger index and fire behaviour on January 18, to fire intensities and rates of spread that were beyond the capacity of any fire fighting force to control.

Fire intensities during the firestorm event were estimated to be well in excess of 100,000 kilowatts per metre of fire front, which is well beyond the range of fire intensities that any fire suppression organisation can plan and manage for or have any capacity to suppress.

No plantation burning

It is interesting to note that the issue of hazardous fuel loads is always discussed in the context of native forests and woodlands, but never in terms of Pinus radiata plantations. This is very relevant to the 2003 fires where extensive areas of pine plantation were burnt, the majority of the area being burnt on January 18. Pinus radiata is highly sensitive to even very low-intensity fire, hence hazard reduction burning is not carried out in any Pinus radiata plantations.

The question could be posed as to the influence and contribution that the heavy litter (duff) loads in the plantations and the moisture-stressed pines themselves, made to the 2003 fires and the “firestorm” that impacted upon the urban areas adjacent to or in the near vicinity of the plantations. It is interesting that the many hours of inquiry into the hazardous nature of the fuels in the native vegetation of the Brindabella Ranges was not extended to consideration of the significance of the pine plantations and their high fuel loads, in either the ACT or NSW coronial inquiries.

Similarly, the location of the plantations in the ACT and the proximity of the very heavy Pinus radiata fuel loads to, or at, the urban interface, and those adjacent to many areas of native forest and woodland in the foothills of Namadgi and Brindabella national parks, were not considered as contributing to the extent and severity of the 2003 fires.

Management lesson

A land management and planning lesson from 2003 must be that the replanting of pine plantations near to existing or proposed future suburbs or developments to the west of the city must be foregone in the interest of protection of life and property from future extreme bushfire events. This is essential as no matter what is done to improve fire management skills and fire suppression techniques and equipment, further extreme fire events will occur and will impact upon the city. The occurrence of the 2001 and 2003 bushfires is evidence of this. It is interesting to note that the fire map of the 1939 fires, following which the Stretton Report initiated many changes to “prevent further such catastrophes”, is almost mirrored in area and burn location by the 2003 fires across the ACT, NSW and Victorian highlands.

This raises the issue of warnings to the general community and when they should have been made. This was dealt with at length in the ACT Coronial Inquiry in terms of warnings on or immediately before January 18, but little attention was paid to the fact that the fires of 2001 should have been the most important warning to the entire community as to the potential for urban areas to be impacted by any fire event.

The 2001 fires were not of the same order in terms of fire intensities as the 2003 fires but did still burn into the urban area, fortunately without causing extensive damage to private property.

In our accumulating experience of bushfires, the 2001 fires should have engendered a greater awareness of potential bushfire behaviour at the urban interface and served as the initial “warning” of the potential of future bushfires (eg, in 2003) burning in the Brindabella Ranges (and elsewhere) to burn into, and impact upon, the city.

Maybe everyone in the community at large failed to heed this initial warning and hence did not initiate actions appropriate to individual requirements and expectations for the protection of private property in the 2003 fires.

The future

Hopefully much has been learnt from the experiences of the last five to six years such that further improvements in bushfire management accrue and more strategic planning and program implementation is undertaken. Certainly more can be done but on
Finding common ground on future burning

In September 2007, 28 fire management practitioners and policy makers gathered over two days to discuss and explore common ground on ACT and regional fire management.

The objective of the workshop Future Burning: Meeting the Challenge of Bushfire Management was to build constructive dialogue between key stakeholders with a role or interest in fire management so as to increase future collaboration, particularly within the context of an uncertain fire future, such as under a climatic changing world.

The workshop was timely, taking place immediately prior to the official start of the 2007-08 bushfire season and in time to contribute to the review of the ACT Strategic Bushfire Management Plan.

Jointly initiated by the Conservation Council of the South East Region and Canberra and the Emergency Services Agency, the workshop on September 27 and 28 aimed to discuss fire management away from the previous forms of consultation around specific fire management proposals, plans or a fire event.

It was understood by participants that it was not a decision-making forum, the views of all stakeholders were not necessarily represented, and it had to be viewed in the wider context of a number of other processes relating to fire planning and ongoing land management.

Workshop participants included government officials with responsibility for fire management, conservationists, scientists, volunteer fire fighters, professional fire fighters, land managers, rural landholders and community groups.

Participants identified a number of common values and a series of challenges facing various stakeholders, and suggested some ways forward. The most notable shared view was the importance of bipartisan support and continuity in government policy, structure, strategies and budget for fire management in the ACT. Participants noted one step towards developing this would be a transparent and inclusive process in the current review of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan framework and the forthcoming sub-regional planning processes.

The importance of protecting our environmental assets as well as the need to protect life and property was acknowledged by the participants.

A prominent recurring challenge identified was finding the balance between fuel management practices and other, conflicting, land management objectives, particularly environmental and catchment protection. A second recurring challenge was the use of science in fire management, particularly "conflicting" scientific advice and translating research and scientific information into operational practice.

A key theme was the importance of working in partnership, particularly planning with the community in order to build an understanding and acceptance of shared and personal responsibility in regard to fire management.

Overall, participants welcomed the opportunity to talk in an "unpressured" environment, and supported ongoing dialogue.

Christie Goonrey

More controlled burns criticism

The Victorian National Parks Association has renewed its attack on the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) for its controlled burning program.

The association's research officer, Jenny Barnett, has accused the DSE of repeatedly burning in the same areas to inflate its figures.

Ms Barnett says planned burns for areas near townships, such as Omeo in the south-east, are justified, but conducting burns in remote areas destroys the biodiversity and scientific reference of national parks.

"Controlled burning does help, but it helps mainly where you can get people in to fight it, so it's no good burning remote areas and thinking that's going to be all right for 10 years," she said.

"It won't be from the point of view of fire protection. What you have to do is concentrate your burning on the assets you want to protect, so it's not just questioning the extent of burning, it's the location of burning."

The DSE says not all areas allocated under the program are ignited.

The DSE's senior fire management officer for East Gippsland, Steve Devoog, says there is a difference between protection burning and full-scale ecological burning.

Mr Devoog says although the mapping process could be changed, biodiversity is always taken into account during burns, and the risk of not doing anything is too great.

After the 2003 fires — fire management issues and concerns (continued from page 8)

a sound, well-defined and sensitive basis. This includes well planned and cooperative fire management orientated research and education programs.

The predictions for climate change over the next 20 to 30 years suggest that the incidence of fire ignitions will increase commensurate with higher temperatures and lower prevailing humidity and rainfall.

How fire and land management personnel will meet this challenge will be very much dependent on the general public's appreciation, acceptance and support of fire management programs, particularly in major catchment areas and conservation areas. It will also require a breakdown of entrenched attitudes to fire management that have negated many past initiatives to improve fire management planning and fire suppression.

Roger Good

Alpine Ecologist, Lecturer in Fire Science and Land Management (Sydney and Charles Sturt Universities)

Previously: NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (now retired); Fire Research and Fire Management Officer; Past member of ACT Bushfire Council

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Climate change complexities

Asia Pacific countries meeting at a summit in Sydney in September agreed on a common statement on climate change after intense wrangling between rich and emerging nations. The document, which was not binding, contains an “aspirational” target of reducing energy intensity but also stresses the primacy of the United Nations in the fight against climate change.

Drafted by experts of the 21-member Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation, the text was submitted for approval to APEC leaders.

A senior Southeast Asian official said the statement urged nations to reduce energy intensity by 25 per cent by 2030 but did not make an enforceable commitment. APEC was not a binding organisation, he said. He added that the statement was “formulated in such a way that it does not prejudice” the UN process.

Australia had proposed a tough statement on climate change, which would draw in emerging nations to make cuts in greenhouse gases, but it triggered a fierce debate, with emerging nations led by China saying they did not want to be bound by any commitments.

They said all attention should be focused on a UN climate change conference in Bali in December, which aims to lay the groundwork for a treaty to replace the Kyoto Protocol on curbing emissions.

In comment on the BBC news, Richard Black outlined international negotiations being conducted in various world centres and said the complexity appeared to be a bad thing to some nations, notably the governments of Malaysia, China and the Philippines which opposed Australian and US moves to get a climate resolution from the Sydney APEC meeting.

Black said the APEC formula, as originally proposed by Australia with Washington’s blessing, envisaged developed and developing nations alike signing up to goals — not on reducing greenhouse gas emissions however, but on improving “energy intensity”.

Brought first into the political arena by President Bush, the intensity concept is basically a measure of how efficiently your economy uses energy — the ratio of wealth created to energy expended.

It is a concept that environmental groups find deeply troubling. “Even with the proposed target (of a 25 per cent improvement in intensity by 2030), we would see a net increase in emissions from the region,” said Tony Mohr, climate change campaigner from the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF). “Intensity improves, but the economy grows as well. And that’s the problem with intensity targets.”

In the run-up to the APEC summit, the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARE) produced a report forecasting that under business-as-usual, emissions from APEC nations would grow by 130 per cent between now and 2050.

With the deployment of technologies such as renewables, nuclear, clean coal and energy efficiency, ABARE calculated it would be feasible to reduce that emissions figure by 49 per cent. Black said this was proposing that a rise in greenhouse gas emissions of about 15 per cent by 2050 was acceptable.

“There is no doubt that climate politics is entering a complex phase,” Black said. “No longer is it the case that nations are either for Kyoto or against it; Japan, for example, is for Kyoto, and yet also for the Asia-Pacific Partnership which comes with a very different level of ambition.

“And no longer are the arguments just about cutting emissions. Funds for adaptation, clean technology rollout, and financing mechanisms are considered by many of the players, certainly by the developing world’s superpowers. Energy security, leverage, avoided deforestation, sequestration ... the list is almost as long as Angela Merkel’s climate travel itinerary.

“But amidst these swirling, evanescent mists it is possible to discern two familiar philosophical pillars. In one, governments commit to common policies based on the science which, rightly or wrongly, they have endorsed through their membership of the IPCC, and which the Stern Review has declared affordable. In the other, they subject business-as-usual to only slight voluntary curtailments that will not distort its basic high-carbon shape.”

Abridged by Graeme Wicks from an article by Agence France-Presse, 7 September 2007.

SEE-Change

NPA life member Fiona MacDonald Brand brings this organisation to our attention — Ed.

SEE-Change (SEE = Society, Environment, Economy) is a new movement, commenced in 2006 in Canberra, which is about empowering individuals and communities to understand what is going on and to take action for a “healthy population on a healthy planet”.

Climate change and drought are two issues which now affect all Australians. SEE-Change is promoting broad community discussion and understanding of these and other issues, such as injustice, the state of our democracy and the way our economy works.

SEE-Change works at a local community level and depends on volunteers from the community who care about these things and are willing to work with people in the area to become better informed and to change them.

The difference

How does a SEE-Change Group differ from a community centre or club? Perhaps the closest comparison is with mechanics institutes of the 19th century, which arose out of a hunger for knowledge and ideas among working people in a time of technological advance and uneasiness about the ability of government and business to provide answers to pressing problems. By contrast, community centres have, broadly, a welfare function and play a vital role in supporting citizens through personal, financial, etc difficulties. Clubs are narrower in focus, specialising in a single issue or membership cohort.

SEE-Change centres and groups are intended to be places where people of all ages can meet, learn and talk about problems confronting all of us, particularly the fast-emerging environmental and health challenges that are global in reach, but require individual and local action to deal with them.

Find out more

There is a website which describes activities of two groups in Canberra, at Jamison and South Woden, www.see-change.org.au. You can also contact Bob Douglas (0409 233 138) Convenor of the SEE-Change Steering Group for the ACT. SEE-Change is a project of the Nature and Society Forum www.natsoc.org.au (Tel 02 6288 0760).

NPA BULLETIN—DECEMBER 2007
NPA OUTINGS PROGRAM

December 2007 — March 2008

Outings Guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distance grading (per day)</th>
<th>Terrain grading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 — up to 10km</td>
<td>A — Road, fire-trail, track</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 — 10km to 15km</td>
<td>B — Open forest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 — 15km to 20km</td>
<td>C — Light scrub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 — above 20km</td>
<td>D — Patches of thick scrub, regrowth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Outings:
- Day Walks: Carry lunch, drinks and protective clothing.
- 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.
- Other activities include work parties, ski trips, canoe trips, nature rambles and environmental and field guide studies.

Wednesday Walks are arranged on a joint NPA / CBC / FBI basis. Notification and detail is by email to registered members. Only the NPA-run walks are shown in this program. For email registration, contact the Outings Convener.

Points to note

Please help keep our outings program alive by volunteering to lead outings. New leaders are most welcome. The outings convener is happy to suggest locations suitable for a walk if you do not have something in mind yourself. Feel free to send in suggestions for outings to the association's office as soon as you think of them, with a suggested date.

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, 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 their 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 start of the activity.

To minimize 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 club, the leader or any other participants in tort or contract.
2 December, Sunday Walk
Mt GUDGENBY
Map: Rendezvous Creek, Yaouk 1:25 000
Grading: 4 A/C/D/E
Leader: Neville Esau
Contact: 6286 4176 or nmax@bigpond.com

Meet at the Namadgi Visitors Centre, past Tharwa, at 8:00am for a long day conquering one of the iconic peaks close to Canberra. The views from the top are well worth the sometimes very steep and challenging climb. Some rock scrambling and regrowth to contend with. Drive 140km, $50 per car.
Fit walkers only please.

30 November to 3 December, Car Camp
GUNGARLIN RIVER
Joint KHA / NPA Activity
Leader: Graham Scully
Contact: 6230 3302 or scullymobs@netspeed.com.au

A 4-day weekend with the Willis family, the builders of Botharam Plain Hut, and John Libke, a CSIRO rabbit researcher into myxomatosis.
A grand opportunity to talk with and learn from people who lived and worked in the area before it was declared a National Park.
Conservation works will also be carried out on Botharam Plain Hut during this weekend.
Shorter stays OK.

8 December, Saturday Work Party
GUDGENBY BUSH REGENERATION GROUP
Contact: Syd Comfort, 6286 2578, scomfort@netspeed.com.au, or Clive Hurst, 0407 783 422, cjhurls@bigpond.com

Meet at Namadgi Visitor Centre, Tharwa at 9:15am or Yankee Hat car park at 10:00am. Work in the regeneration area in the morning. Tools provided.

Stay on for Christmas party lunch, which will be provided, enjoyed in the shade of regenerating trees. In the afternoon a leisurely stroll to check the progress of tree plantings.

10 to 14 December, Pack Walk
JAGUNGAL WILDERNESS
Map: Khancoban, Kosciuszko 1:50 000 (or equivalent 1:25 000s)
Grading: 3 A/B
Leaders: Neville Esau and Tim Walsh
Contact: Tim on 6285 1112 or thompson.walsh@netspeed.com.au

A 5-day pack walk exploring the Jagungal wilderness including visits to Mt Jagungal, Brassy Mountain, Valentine Falls and many other interesting features. Group numbers will be limited. If interested contact leader asap for a more detailed description.
Drive 480km, $173 per car

15 January, Tuesday
WALKS COMMITTEE MEETING
Convener: Stephen Forst
Contact: 6251 6817(h) 6219 5236(w) or steven.forst@acma.gov.au

Meeting to set Outings/Activities program for the period April to June 2008. Contact convener for details and location.

16 December, Sunday Walk
BLUE LAKE FROM GUTHEGA
Map: Perisher Valley 1:25 000
Grading: 3 A/C
Leader: Brian Slee
Contact: 6281 0719 or brianslee@iprimus.com.au

Depart 6:45am for Guthega. Walk south to Illawong, cross Snowy River then climb west to pass between Twynam and Little Twynam. Descend to Blue Lake via spectacular western route. After lunch cross Blue Lake Creek, climb Crummer Spur and return via outward route. Alpine meadows and wildflowers. Afternoon tea Jindabyne. About 16km with several steep climbs.
Contact leader for meeting place.
Drive 420km, $150 per car plus NP entry fee.

6 January, easy Sunday Walk
TUGGERANONG HILL CIRCUIT
Map: Tuggeranong 1:25 000
Grading: 1 A/B
Leader: Mike Bremers
Contact: 6292 3408(h), 6283 2052(w) or mcbrermers@optusnet.com.au

Meet at 8:00am at Calwell Shops (in carpark between Calwell Club and Calwell Tavern) for a short drive to the start of the walk near the substation at the southern end of Theodore. The walk is almost all on firetrail. We will do a circuit walk around the base of Tuggeranong Hill followed by a walk to the summit which involves some steep sections. Expect to be back at the cars before lunchtime.
20 January, easy Sunday Walk
SMOKERS TRAIL AIRCRAFT CRASH SITE
Map: Corin Dam 1:25 000
Grading: 1 A/B/C
Leader: Mike Bremers
Contact: 6292 3406(h), 6283 2052(w)
or mcbremers@optusnet.com.au

An 8km return walk to the crash site of a light aircraft. The walk starts at the Square Rock carpark and is mainly on track or firetrail. Total climb of 300 metres. Expect to be back in Canberra by lunchtime.

Meet at 8:00am at NE corner of Bunnings Tuggeranong carpark, (corner Anketell and Sheerin Streets, opposite Supacheap Auto).

Drive 65km, $20 per car.

23 January, Wednesday Walk
SMOKERS TRAIL AIRCRAFT CRASH SITE
[Joint NPA / CBC / FBI Activity]
Leader: Henry Hatch
Contact: 6290 1138 or hhatch@netspeed.com.au
Details to be advised through the midweek walks email list, otherwise contact the leader.

26–28 January, weekend Car Camp
THREDBO DIGGINGS
Map: Mt Kosciusko 1:25 000
Leader: Adrienne Nicholson
Contact: 6281 6381

Australia Day long weekend outing.
Camper options are to be as active or inactive as desired. Can take chairlift from Thredbo and walk to Kosciusko summit and return; follow the Thredbo River from the village to Dead Horse Gap and return. Half or full day walks or simply relax by (or in) the river around the campsite.

Possibly arrange to join Steve Hill on his day walk (see below).

Contact leader early for details or to book (just keep trying!).

27 January, Sunday Walk
KANGAROO RIDGE, MT STILWELL
Map: Perisher Valley 1:25 000
Grading: 2 A/C
Leader: Steve Hill
Contact: 6231 9186
or lands@landshill@webone.com.au

Stunning views all day. The walk will only proceed if the weather is suitable.

We wander up the Kosciusko track from Charlotte Pass carpark for a couple of km, then stroll up the southern end of Kangaroo Ridge, visiting the source of Merrits Creek. Kangaroo Ridge comprises many rocky peaks some of which offer great views. From Mt Stilwell we join the foot track to the car park.

Please register your interest with the leader by Saturday for details.

Drive 420km, $150 per car plus NP entry fee.

30 January, Wednesday Walk
THE BIG HOLE AND MARBLE ARCH
Map: Kain 1:25 000
Grading: 3 A
Leader: Steven Forst
Contact: 6251 6817(h), 6219 5236(w) or steven.forst@aca.gov.au

Meet at the Canberra Railway station at 8:00am. After crossing the Shoalhaven River, a walk on track mainly through open forest to visit the large sink-hole, over 110m deep, known as the Big Hole. Then continue on to the Marble Arch, a limestone feature at the entrance to a narrow limestone gorge.

Drive 180km, $65 per car.

9 February, Saturday Work Party
GUDGENBY BUSH REGENERATION GROUP
Map: Geehi Dam and Jagungal 1:25 000
Grading: 2 A/C/E
Leader: Philip Gatenby
Contact: 6254 3094 or jandp.gatenby@optusnet.com.au

A four-day walk in the Kosciuszko National Park. The walk starts at Guthega Power Station and will mostly be off tracks. Some steep climbs will be involved. More details will be available closer to the date as the precise route will depend on weather conditions. Contact leader by the Wednesday before the walk.

Drive 420km, $150 per car plus NP entry fee.

10 February, Sunday Walk
MT TWYNAM AND CRUMMER SPUR
Map: Perisher Valley 1:25 000
Grading: 3 A/C/E
Leader: Steve Hill
Contact: 6231 9186
or lands@landshill@webone.com.au

A highly scenic day requiring reasonable fitness, proceeding only if the weather is suitable.

We follow the main track from Charlotte Pass carpark to Blue Lake lookout trekking over the main range to the top of Watson’s Crags (2136m) for fabulous views. Lunch on Mt Twynam and returning via Crummer Spur, Hedley Tarn and crossing Carruthers Creek. Wild flowers should abound.

Please register your interest with the leader by Saturday for details.

Drive 420km, $150 per car plus NP entry fee.

17 February, Sunday Walk
DEADMANS HILL
Map: Corin Dam, Williamsdale 1:25 000
Grading: 1 A/D
Leader: Mike Bremers
Contact: 6292 3408(h), 6283 2052(w) or mcbremers@optusnet.com.au

A 6km return walk from the Booromba Rocks carpark on an old fire trail to Deadmans Hill, then descend NE to pick up the AAWT and return to the carpark. Total climb of 450m. Expect to be back in Canberra by early afternoon. Meet at 8:00am at Bunnings Tuggeranong carpark, NE corner (corner of Anketell and Sheerin Streets, opposite Supacheap Auto).

Drive 85km, $32 per car.

18-21 February, midweek Pack Walk
THE ROLLING GROUND AND GUNGARTON
Map: Corin Dam, Williamsdale 1:25 000
Grading: 3 A/C/E
Leader: Philip Gatenby
Contact: 6254 3094 or jandp.gatenby@optusnet.com.au

A four-day walk in the Kosciuszko National Park. The walk starts at Guthega Power Station and will mostly be off tracks. Some steep climbs will be involved. More details will be available closer to the date as the precise route will depend on weather conditions. Contact leader by the Wednesday before the walk.

Drive 420km, $150 per car plus NP entry fee.
23 February, Saturday Work Party
WOODLAND AREA BEHIND NAMADGI VISITOR CENTRE
Leader: Martin Chalk
Contact: 6292 3502
The area behind the Namadgi Visitor Centre is the first (and sometimes only) taste that visitors get of Namadgi. While the trees are generally in good condition the under-story is in need of work. This work party will involve planting of shrub and under-story species as supplied by the park service. The February timing has been picked to avoid work party activity in the more remote parts of the Park in the bush fire season. All tools provided. Meet at the Namadgi Visitor Centre at 9:30am.

24 February, Sunday Walk
THE ROLLING GROUND
Map: Geehi Dam 1:25 000
Grading: 3 A/C
Leader: Steve Hill
Contact: 6231 9186 or landshill@webone.com.au
A great scenic day requiring reasonable fitness and proceeding if the weather is suitable. We climb Guthega spur from Guthega carpark and continue past Consett Stephen Pass for a few kilometres along the Rolling Grounds. Lunch at the Granite Peaks. Expect great views all day with plenty of wild flowers.

23 January, WEDNESDAY WALK
[Joint NPA / CBC / FBI Activity]
Leader: Philip Gatenby
Contact: 6254 3094 or jandp.gatenby@optusnet.com.au
Details to be advised through the midweek walks email list, otherwise contact the leader.

2 March, Saturday Work Party
GUDGENBY BUSH REGENERATION GROUP
Contact: Syd Comfort, 6286 2578, scomfort@netspeed.com.au, or Clive Hurlstone, 0407 783 422, cjhurls@bigpond.net.au
Meet at Namadgi Visitor Centre, Tharwa at 9:15am or Yankee Hat car park at 10:00am. Work for the rehabilitation of the old Boboyan pine forest area. Tools will be provided.

10 to 13 March, Pack walk
BEN BOYD NATIONAL PARK
Map: Pambula, Eden, Kiah 1:25 000
Grading: 3 A/B/E
Leaders: Tim Walsh and Neville Esau
Contact: Tim on 6285 1112 or thompson.walsh@netspeed.com.au
A three (or four) day walk from Boyd Tower to Green Cape along the coast, with an optional fourth day exploring the Green Cape area and inspecting the Green Cape Light House. This is a great introductory through walk for those wishing to widen their walking experience. Numbers will be limited. A more detailed description is available. Please contact the leaders asap. Drive 500km, $180 per car.

16 March, Sunday Day Walk
MURRUMBIDGEE GULF
Map: Rules Point, Tantangara 1:25 000
Grading: 2 A/B
Leader: Brian Slee
Contact: 6281 0719 or brianslee@iprimus.com.au
Depart 7:15am. A through walk with car shuffle. Drive to Tantangara Dam, leave a car at Gulf Bend and then proceed on Pockets Saddle Road to Murrumbidgee River Fire Trail. Walk downhill on trail to river via Love Nest in the Sallies Hut. Return to Gulf Bend via Peden and Townsend Huts. Bring sandalshoes for river crossings. Walk 12km. Afternoon tea Adaminaby. Contact leader for meeting place. Drive 160km, $548 per car.

26 March, WEDNESDAY WALK
[Joint NPA / CBC / FBI Activity]
Leader: Mike Smith
Contact: 6286 2984 or msmith@netspeed.com.au
Details to be advised through the midweek walks email list, otherwise contact the leader.

29 March, Saturday Work Party
NAAS CREEK AREA
Leader: Martin Chalk
Contact: 6292 3502
This work party will be a continuation of last year's efforts in the same area and is a part of the NNP's task to rid the Naas Creek of woody weeds. The area of operation will be upstream of the Mt Clear campground and will involve cutting and dabbing of briars and blackberry. All tools and equipment will be provided, just bring an appetite for weed control. Meet at the Namadgi Visitor Centre at 9:00am. Drive 160km, $48 per car.

Outings Convenor: Mike Smith
6286 2984 or msmith@netspeed.com.au

NPA OUTINGS PROGRAM — DECEMBER 2007–MARCH 2008
GRBG winter work reveals many talents

During the winter months, the Gundigburry Bush Regeneration Group has been busy planting trees along the Old Boboyan Road, repairing fencing and corner posts to enclosures and also sandbagging old fire trails to prevent further erosion. The variety of tasks has shown the group to be multi-talented and able to address a variety of challenges.

The trees on the Old Boboyan Road were all planted with tree guards for protection against damage from kangaroos. They were sited to prevent further erosion as there is considerable run-off from the road during storms. In total, about 25 Banksia marginata, 65 Acacia melanoxylon and 20 eucalypts were planted.

Repairing the fire trail on Amanda Slope required sand bags to be made up and placed across the slope. Trees were also planted in strategic places and it is hoped that this will prevent further damage and slow the flow of water where it reaches the road. Large gullies have been created in the road, making it difficult for cars to cross, so on most occasions, when using Frank and Jack’s Hut as a base for the day, we have used vehicles with higher clearance.

An exclosure near Frank and Jack’s Hut has also been repaired. This required replacing two corner posts and hanging a gate. Fencing wire was repaired and tightened. We plan to perform a vegetation survey of species present in the exclosure this year, and compare the findings with what grows once grazing has been excluded for a season.

In May, we placed a rain gauge near the car park entrance so we could record rainfall every month. June and July were good months with 64 and 90mls respectively, but the following months have not recorded good falls. We hope that rainfall will be sufficient to reduce the amount of watering required during the summer.

Over the next few months committee members will produce a paper outlining some long-term plans for the future direction of the group now that the whole former plantation area has been successfully seeded. The paper will provide objectives and goals until 2010. Tenth year celebrations will take place in August 2008 and plans are already underway to make this a very special occasion.

If you would like to join with the group on one of their monthly work parties, please contact Clive Hurst at 0407 784 322 for details of the program and where to meet.

Hazel Rath

Changing management at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve

On Tuesday October 23 community groups with an interest in Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve (TNR) met at Volunteering ACT in Belconnen to hear about the proposed volunteer program which is being run by Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) in Tidbinbilla.

Groups represented included Tidbinbilla Pioneers Association, ACT Herpetological Association, Friends of Grasslands, Canberra Ornithologists Group, Southern ACT Catchment Group, Field Naturalists Association of Canberra, Australian Native Plants Society, the Conservation Council, and the National Parks Association. It was a shame that Friends of Tidbinbilla could not make it.

Rod Hillman, Acting General Manager of Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, provided a map showing the new “Wetlands” area and mentioned the studies that have been carried out and the reasons behind some of the changes taking place at the Reserve. He also explained why the ACT Government has decided to contract CVA to undertake some aspects of TNR management. In the future, CVA will manage the Visitor Centre and investigate possible ecotourism products but the scope of this meeting was to discuss the first stage of this partnership — the Volunteer Interpreter Program.

Madeline Townsend is a National Manager with CVA, based in Ballarat. She outlined the history of CVA, the wide range of programs that CVA currently operates and some of its achievements. The $300 000 contract will be the first time CVA has taken on a project of this nature. Paula Banks will be the Volunteer Manager at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and will be located on site.

Volunteers would be asked to undertake training and then provide interpretation services in the new wetlands area, to be opened early in 2008. Later in the year volunteers would staff the Visitor Centre and collect the reintroduced entry fee of $10 per car; further duties may be included in the contract later on.

Volunteer interpreters would be asked to make a one-off payment of $50 ($30 concession) before commencing training which is designed to foster a level of commitment from the potential Volunteer Interpreter. It would be a big-time commitment and there was some concern that CVA would not be able to find enough suitable people for the program as many people who might be interested are already active members of the groups represented. Suggestions for volunteer sources included students. People can contribute by assisting with training or by making arrangements to participate in interpretation activities that are outside the program.

Public transport to Tidbinbilla remains a big problem for visitors and Volunteer Interpreters. Options such as car pooling and use of bike hire to get around the reserve are being explored.

Anyone seeking more information can email Paula Banks on pbanks@conservationvolunteers.com.au or phone her on (02) 6247 7770.

Christine Goonrey

NPA BULLETIN—DECEMBER 2007

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Looking at Scottsdale and Bullanamang

Bush Heritage's Owen Whitaker gave a presentation at the September 2007 NPA general meeting.

Scottsdale

Scottsdale, a 1328ha Bush Heritage property bought in December 2006, lies to the north of Bredbo, between the Monaro Highway and the Murrumbidgee, and is a near neighbour of Namadgi National Park. It forms the first major step of Bush Heritage's Kosciuszko to Coast (K2C) landscape project. Many members of NPA ACT support Bush Heritage and wanted to see Scottsdale; finally arrangements were made for committee members to visit the property on September 27 this year. About 12 of us gathered at the two galvanised iron shelters, one for tractors and the other for humans, to meet Bush Heritage staff, Paul Evans and later, Owen Whitaker, along with K2C Project Facilitator, Lauren Van Dyke. Seats were arranged under a tree near a truck laden with native plants that volunteers were transferring that week to their new home on the Gungoandra Creek banks.

The rustic scene was supplemented by a cool breeze, and cake and fruit that Bush Heritage helpers passed around. Travis, Annette and Mike's grandson, represented the future generation and had an amazing capacity for cake consumption.

Bush Heritage philosophy

Paul, a funding coordinator, gave us an overview, linking Bush Heritage's philosophy with Scottsdale: to regenerate a degraded property and to preserve its natural temperate grassland and box gum woodland, two of Australia's most threatened habitats. Its value also lies in its proximity to Namadgi National Park and the link it forms in the K2C project.

Paul explained that a major emphasis for Bush Heritage is to form collaborative partnerships with local, regional, state and national non-government and government organisations to achieve wider conservation goals.

Scottsdale's challenges include serrated tussock, African lovegrass, feral pigs, deer and rabbits, the continuing drought, and the subdivision of land to the south into hobby farms or 'lifestyle blocks'. Bush Heritage is running 80 cattle in a strategic African lovegrass suppression project with a contractual agreement with local graziers. The organisation works with and supports other K2C partners to provide incentives to farmers to improve their land using appropriate conservation measures.

Management complexities

For management purposes the property is divided into conservation activity cells. Owen, manager of Bush Heritage's NSW properties, arrived and took us in a 4WD convoy to selected spots. Our first stop was a control paddock of straw-coloured African lovegrass, which gives the landscape its bleached look. Cattle graze the grass but sheep, being picky eaters, won't because they get tangled up in it.

As well as performing the function of holding soil and moisture, the African lovegrass, if kept grazed to moderate biomass levels, also provides habitat for quails. It illustrates the complexities of management when introduced plant species provide shelter and food for native fauna.

African lovegrass spreads through human disturbance and has a very small seed. Bringing about a reduction of the weed's dominance and increasing the native grassland species component over time will require a careful trial and error process, Owen explained, and attempting wholesale eradication would be costly and possibly counter-productive.

On the other side of the control paddock fence were native forbs mixed with patches of African lovegrass, another dilemma for management. Four species of parrots have been observed in the mix of natives and African lovegrass.

The idea is to provide conditions for native plants to invade the African lovegrass patches after they've been subjected to grazing and possible patch burning which will be monitored and accommodated using adaptive management techniques.

Pine trees to stay

Behind us stood a windbreak of pine trees. Would that go? "Not for the moment," said Owen. "We've observed that the pines provide habitat for black cockatoos and other woodland bird species and the grass nearby will be kept low to reduce fire risk.

Although exotic, the barley and silver grass that have emerged in the grazed cells on Scottsdale help reduce the African..."
lovegrass’s explosive summer growth. After good summer rain, Owen predicted that 800 head of cattle would be needed to keep the African lovegrass down.

In the middle distance we could see an eroded gully where the rich alluvial soils had been cultivated and grazed. Measures to reduce erosion include encouraging good grass cover on the 1000-acre plateau to reduce runoff, and scalping the sheep nutrient areas to fill the blind erosion gullies in preparation for growing sedges. Native grasses will be planted in the scalped areas.

In the less disturbed areas grow kangaroo grass (Themeda), another native grass (Stipa), and forbs.

Our second stop was beside the railway cutting and a tunnel along the Goulburn-Canberra-Cooma-Bombo line which is now disused except for the Railway Historical Society’s journeys to Michelago. While the railway was being built in the 1870s, trees were cut down for sleepers and to provide fuel for the 200 workers camped at the site. Railway buffs interested in the line’s history sometimes want access to Scottsdale to photograph the railway tunnel, another management consideration.

Adding intrigue to the area were the leek orchids and the deep pink stones and earth; unfortunately, no one could identify the stone.

**River frontage**

Owen led us down to the Murrumbidgee which was flowing reasonably strongly. It was a tranquil spot lined with some patches of willows that will stay for the time being, helping to keep the banks secure. Scottsdale’s four and a half kilometre river frontage is home to water dragons, platypus and peregrine falcons.

NSW State Fisheries have approached Bush Heritage about restocking the river frontage on their property with the endangered species, Macquarie and silver perch, which used to be common but are now rare.

As we returned to the sheds for lunch, we saw the volunteers with Lauren, hard at work on the Gungoandra Creek banks, planting bottlebrush (Callistemon), tea tree (Leptospermum), and Acacia where the pigs had churned the soil. They were planting Lomandra on top of the banks.

Five thousand plants were waiting to be bedded down. Twelve volunteers had planted 570 on Wednesday, a significant achievement.

Although the day was mild, the sun had a sting which the band of hardy volunteers must have felt down near the creek. We stopped near a large cage used for trapping feral pigs. Once in, they can’t escape and they are then shot, not poisoned. This is done with the help of the Rural Lands Protection Board.

After lunch under the trees, we headed off with Lauren on to the plateau which gave an excellent view of faded blue hills lining the distance, the middle distance interspersed with tans and yellows. It brought to mind the 20th century landscape painters like George Lambert who portrayed the colours, light and shadows of the southern highlands and the Eden–Monaro so accurately.

Lauren pointed out the reddish kangaroo grass and said the seed sown for regeneration is local. The roo population comprises eastern greys, euros and swamp wallabies which are probably chewing the Themeda.

Scottsdale’s woodland trees are the endangered yellow box (Eucalyptus melliodora) along with apple box (Eucalyptus bridgesiana), and attempts are being made to increase the area of yellow box.

**Endangered dragon**

At our vantage point, Adrienne spotted a small lizard which some thought was a juvenile bearded dragon. Scottsdale staff are watching out for the grassland earless dragon which is endangered and endemic.

We continued ascending to the top of the plateau where Lauren showed us small eucalyptus dancing in the wind. They were the endangered Eucalyptus pulverulenta or the silver mountain gum, and were obviously well adapted to the harsh conditions and the exposed site. NPA ACT’s newly launched Field Guide to the Native Trees of the ACT describes E. pulverulenta as being “Very rare and localised in the wild, the nearest population being found on Black Ridge southeast of Bredbo” (p. 87).

Lauren explained that an advisor on local Aboriginal culture had commented on the lack of Lomandra and of big birds like the emu which is a good seed propagator. Might emus be reintroduced to the property?

We descended steeply through open dry sclerophyll woodland, returning to our starting point for the day, and thanked our Bush Heritage hosts for showing us around and explaining the value of Scottsdale and the intricacies and challenges of management.

Some of us have been concerned about the use of cattle to graze pest species on the property for fear that the argument could bolster the case advanced by graziers in favour of grazing cattle in national parks. It is easier to accept grazing as a tool on a combined agricultural and conservation site when it is seen in the context of managing a property with clearly delineated boundary fences. The other important aspect is the close monitoring with an emphasis on regeneration and conservation of native vegetation.

It had been a very pleasant and informative day and NPA ACT hopes to establish a working partnership with Bush Heritage and Scottsdale. The committee also decided to send the organisation a donation of $300 as a measure of our support.

**Bullanamang**

Bullanamang is an adjacent property which we had heard was of high conservation value and on the market for between $300 000 and $400 000 (see NPA Bulletin, September 2007). The property includes river frontage with the Murrumbidgee on its eastern side, and sub-alpine vegetation extending to Mt Clear.

It had been offered to Bush Heritage who rejected it because it did not fit all

(Continued on page 14)
Looking at Scottsdale and Bullanamang  
(Continued from page 13)

their criteria, including their focus on conserving temperate grassland.

Worrying if it would be possible to form a group of people interested in buying the property, four of us visited Bullanamang several weeks before the Scottsdale visit.

The day was initially misty but cleared to crisp perfection. We met the two stock and station agents, John and Stewart, who had lived most of their lives in the Cooma-Canberra region and knew many of the locals. They were also well into joshing each other about the relative merits of their 4WDs.

We had been warned that access was 4WD only. It was. The Murrumbidgee was flowing fast and deep, prompting Stewart to check on his mobile with the property owner that a crossing was feasible. The two vehicles formed impressive bow waves but we reached the other bank without further excitement.

The track, rutted, uneven and rough, took us past a green tin shed, actually on another property, which the agents thought epitomised the Australian bush shack. Sonja, Kevin, Muriel and I weren't too enthused. Bullet holes, empty bottles, graffiti, trophies and the general atmosphere made us want to keep going.

The dry forest with apple box and gums glinting in the sunlight and little pockets of snow lining dips and hollows in the snowgrass.

The top of Mt Clear with granite boulders yielded a clear view of Mt Jagungal to the south, wearing a good mantle of snow, and of Mt Morgan roughly in front of us: a refreshing panorama of the Australian Alps which brought back memories of many walks.

On the way back to the vehicles, the super optimist thought that buying such a property would be straightforward and that Bullanamang could pretty well manage itself with minimum interference. The cautious ones pointed out the difficulties of maintaining the road, the challenges in keeping weeds and feral pests at bay, plus the ever-present concern of fire management and liaising with the authorities. And how would you cope with shooters?

Once back in the 4WDs we encountered an ACT government vehicle from TAMS. The driver very assertively asked our first driver what he was doing there. He responded smartly, equally assertively. We gathered the TAMS staff were clearing the road for fire control access because the road borders Namadgi National Park.

During the steep descent, the first 4WD did a dramatic slide on a bend that threatened to overturn the vehicle. We arrived minutes later to be stopped. Kevin and Sonja praised their driver's coolness but were obviously shaken. Muriel and I, leaving nothing to chance, abandoned our 4WD but our driver was forewarned and negotiated the bend successfully.

We slowly descended to a sub-alpine flat with a small dam reverberating with a chorus of the resident frogs. We spotted a small dark one, the plains froglet, Crinia parinsignifera. Our last stop was for the view down to the Murrumbidgee and a look at the serrated tussock, another cursed import.

Returning to Bredbo for a coffee and debrief after thanking our irrepressible agents, the majority view of our little group felt that it was a beautiful property well worth conserving for its forest and sub-alpine area.

It would be best for an organisation like Bush Heritage to manage, especially with the difficult access and the lack of a building entitlement.

The latest news is that an organisation similar to NPA ACT has bought the property which may be managed later in conjunction with Bush Heritage. Less welcome news is that a communications tower has been built on the top of Mt Clear and the impact has been significant. Also fire authorities want to build a dam on one of Bullanamang's creeks. What impact will the construction of the dam have?

Bush Heritage's potential involvement in managing two properties adjacent to Namadgi National Park can only be a plus. It will help conserve the biodiversity of part of the Kosciuszko to Coast area and act as a buffer zone for the southern boundary of Namadgi as well as encouraging park neighbours to adopt practices which will help protect the environment.

Judy Kelly
In the Budawangs

Wog Wog to Monolith Valley,
10–12 March 2007

Seven of us left from the Wog Wog entrance to Morton National Park in sunshine. We soon crossed Wog Wog Creek which was flowing strongly as a result of plenty of recent rain. An hour from the cars we passed a rocky outcrop called Tinderry View and 30 minutes later the junction of a track to Corang Lagoon. Ten minutes further on our track went between two large conglomerates where from the rock to the north there are good views. By the time we had passed the turn-off to Admiration Point and reached Corang Peak it was after midday.

A little further on we lunched overlooking Corang Arch (see cover photo). First stop after lunch was Yurnga Lookout at the head of Burrumbeet Brook, for breathtaking views over Mt Owen, Pigeon House and Yadboro. An hour and a half from the lookout we arrived at our intended campsite on the headwaters of the Corang River below Mt Tarn.

Next day, again in sunshine, we set out at 8:00am with day packs on the track towards Mt Donjon and Mt Cole. The track continues eastwards, passes a junction with a track to the north to Mt Tarn, then turns more to the south east through tea-tree, swamp and forest, eventually crossing a tributary of Angel Creek flowing north east. In places the track was difficult to see. Climbing out of the creek we came across small bright red fungi, then dropped to a saddle between two large boulders, then climbed onto the base of Cole’s cliffs for a well-earned breather in a small overhang.

Tracks went in both directions from the overhang to circumnavigate Mt Cole. We chose the clockwise direction to the north. Almost half an hour after leaving the overhang we came to a tree marked with a large arrow pointing eastwards to the gully between Mt Donjon and Mt Cole. Through the gully we turned south, passing Seven Gods Pinnacles, then descended into Monolith Valley.

Special place

It’s a special place, described in Pigeon House and Beyond as “an elevated hidden valley surrounded by magnificent cliffs and dotted with huge monoliths and crags” (p. 186). The sandstone walls either side of the valley are strewn with a variety of ferns, tree roots and climbers. Rainforest trees such as sassafras and possum wood, reach to the light from the valley floor.

We spent an hour in Monolith Valley, including having to backtrack a few hundred metres to find the natural arch we’d previously passed by without noticing. The arch was first recorded by Europeans in 1960 by Fred Kitchener. A bridge and track to the east to Nibelung Pass marks the southern end of Monolith Valley. Our track to the west between Mt Owen and Mt Cole involved a scramble upwards of about five metres which brought us into a gloomy gully choked with large sandstone boulders. Further on we crossed an amphitheatre strewn with more boulders, then climbed onto the side of Mt Owen. A rope fastened to a tree beside a small, almost subterranean waterfall made the scramble possible.

Spectacular views

I was grateful we had not chosen the track anti-clockwise around Mt Cole as climbing up the waterfall seemed much easier than climbing down. After more, but easier, scrambling up a gully we stopped on the side of Mt Owen for a lunch with spectacular views over Mt Nibelung and Yadboro. With lunch over we continued westwards following cairns along the northern side of Mt Owen, then dropped into a saddle between Mt Owen and Mt Cole.

More descending, including a traverse of a sloping rock face, brought us to the south-west corner of Mt Cole’s cliffs. Half an hour later we were again in the overhang where we’d visited in the morning, having completed the circumnavigation of Mt Cole. From the overhang the return to the tents took another hour.

Another 8:00am start from the campsite, this time with packs. Overnight drizzle had cleared well before dawn. We retraced our steps from the first day past Bibbenluke Mountain and Yurnga Lookout, along Burrumbeet Brook (where we disturbed a snake sunning itself) and across Canowie Brook to the base of the Conglomerate Slope (map reference 375924).

Here we took a less well-marked track along Canowie Brook, crossing it a number of times. At its junction with the Corang River is an area of pools and waterfalls known as the Many Rock Ribbs. Beyond the ribs the track is easier to follow through more open scrub and after the junction with Broula Brook is marked by rock cairns to Corang Lagoon.

The lagoon is a popular destination for day and overnight walkers. Much of the vegetation cover has been worn away and on this visit a lot of litter was scattered around the main camping area. We cooled off in the lagoon and collected as much litter as we could carry. The track from the lagoon goes south-west, crosses a number of creeks (including Goodsell Creek), to its junction with the main Wog Wog Track. From here it was another 75 minutes to the cars.


Map: Corang 1:25 000 Second Edition

Philip Gatenby
South Australia’s Heysen Trail with Ted Fleming

Ted Fleming, NPA member and the invited speaker at NPA’s July general meeting, recalled his completion of a great Australian bushwalk (1200 km from one end to the other), only the 71st person to do so.

Charles Warren Bonython, scientist, keen outdoor man and conservationist who proposed the Heysen Trail in 1969, with the help of Terry Lavender, “an anti-bureaucratic public servant, mountain climber and bushwalker”, as Ted described him, Bonython initiated the trail.

The trail is testimony to the cooperation between landholders and several levels of government incorporating local, district, regional and state. The track traverses a variety of landscapes: coastal, small farms, agricultural including the famous Barossa vineyards, mountains and forests.

Ted’s serious bushwalking started in the 1940s, long before fire trails and 4WD tracks became a feature of the bush. He walked from one end of the trail to the other, from Cape Jervis to Parachilna Gorge, at intervals over seven years between 1994 and 2001, during autumn, winter and spring. His slides revealed both the beauty and the harshness of the landscape. The red, burnished country the Heysen Trail traverses is frequently rough, water is scarce and the views overall give you a feel of the unyielding Outback. A shot of Ted’s blue tent pitched with rocks weighing the corners down emphasised the cold, windy nights, another extreme.

His experiences reflected human and geological history’s juxtaposition with the modern, in the form of communication towers on hills along the way.

The start

Ted left Cape Jervis on the Fleurieu Peninsula, his coastal shots of the sand dunes and sea giving way to tree-lined lanes, grass trees, country roads and the Finniss River with permanent water. This was one of the green spots of the trip with the Valley of Third Falls, near Morialta, and close to Adelaide, whose urban tentacles are gradually but ruthlessly destroying the beauty of the Adelaide hills.

After climbing Mt lofty, Ted passed through farms and forest to the Kaiserstuhl Conservation Park which hints at the good things of life, before leading the walker on to the Barossa vineyards with their beckoning trellises. Ted wasn’t tempted on this occasion.

All is not plain ambles because walkers are warned at Stein Hill (600m) that the weather conditions in the section before Burra can be very hazardous with heavy mists and cold sleety winds. Signage here is infrequent and habitation very sparse.

The Heysen Trail passes Burra where Cornish tin miners worked the copper lode in the 1800s and used their masonry skills, leaving a legacy of elegant stone buildings and mine chimneys.

After Burra, Ted’s slides took us through bare, exposed sheep country and mallee style scrub before Newkie Creek, and Tooralie Gorge. He showed us the uncompromising rocky gorges and conditions facing the nineteenth century farmers who had to negotiate the ranges to access the railroads to Adelaide, creating deep cuttings through the hard rock to establish a route for the wool wagons.

Geologist and Antarctic explorer, Sir Douglas Mawson, lived near Mt Bryan (950m) which Ted described as “bristling with telecommunication towers”. He then walked through open country, noting the historic stone wall along the Brown Hill Range and mentioning the 12km of very irregular, rough walking.

The Mt Bryan/Brown Hill Range area has been selected as a site for very extensive wind farm development in the near future.

Goyder’s Line

At Spalding, Ted enjoyed Freshwater Campsite with ornate 19th century gates that looked like an old fashioned cast-iron bedstead, before enduring a 9km straight road bash to George Town and to the Rocky River crossing. This is where Goyder’s Line was set, at the 2.54m (10 inches in the imperial system) rainfall line, to determine the limits of viable agriculture.

Ted showed us a shot of Crystal Brook, its attractive grassy track lined with majestic eucalypts giving respite from the harsh landscape.

He described The Bluff (770m) as another prominence “bristling with huge telecommunication towers.”

Approaching Mt Remarkable (930m) near Melrose, about half way along the Trail, Ted took a shot of a small plane crash site, marked by a black patch. On 3 July 1980, a twin engine plane refuelled at Leigh Creek and took off at 1:50pm for Adelaide. Mount Remarkable was totally shrouded in cloud and the pilot, although not qualified to do so, decided to continue his flight in cloud. The pilot of another aircraft advised deteriorating weather ahead but clear conditions to the west. The Adelaide-bound aircraft, now at 2850ft turned right, flying straight into the mountain 300ft below its summit.

Ted’s next point of interest was Horrocks Pass, named after the explorer John Horrocks who, in 1846, reached Depot Creek, explorer John Eyre’s old campsite. In attempting to shoot waterfowl from the back of a kneeling camel, Horrocks lost the middle fingers of his right hand and a row of teeth when the camel moved and the gun discharged. He died three weeks later from septicaemia.

Plants collected

Mt Brown (970m) is scarcely a name to inspire interest but Ted’s mentioning that the first white man to ascend the hill in 1802 was from Matthew Flinders’ ship, the Investigator, was intriguing. They were naturalist Robert Brown, artist and naturalist Ferdinand Bauer, and artist William Westall who were all benthed on Mt Brown without food or water.

They collected and named the native pear (Cynanchum florihundum) and the silver emu bush (Eremophila scoparia) from Mt Brown and Bauer illustrated them.

The Royal Geographical Society of South Australia in conjunction with National Parks and Wildlife South Australia installed the memorial to Robert Brown at the top of Mt Brown in 2002. It tells us that the hill was significant to the ancestors of the present day Nukunu people who witnessed the arrival of the Investigator.

Progressing further north to the plains west of the Flinders Ranges, Ted warned us that the flat camp at Thompson’s Gap can be very cold in July.

Ted’s next historical shot was a slide of a monument at Depot Creek which John Eyre discovered in 1839. It is dedicated to several people, including (Continued on page 17)
**Book Review**

**Antarctica — Securing its Heritage for the Whole World**

Geoff Mosley

**ENVIROBOOK, 2007**

Dr Mosley wrote this short book to advance the case for World Heritage listing for Antarctica (the whole continent and its ice shelves), and to seek its inclusion on the ‘Heritage in Danger’ listing.

The 29-page book, with a foreword by Senator Bob Brown, has seven chapters and two appendices, including a very useful brief history of the territorial claims (Chapter 1) and attempts at heritage protection in Antarctica (Chapter 2).

The author outlines the process to achieve World Heritage listing of Antarctica’s heritage values and his staged approach to listing (Chapter 3).

Chapters 4 and 5 outline the short history of previous nominations and a possible alternative approach for securing the listing.

Chapter 6 contains the all-important recommendations, and he wraps up the book with the conclusions in Chapter 7.

The core of the book is Mosley’s argument that Antarctica satisfies not one but several of the criteria for listing, first and foremost criterion (viii): the development of land forms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features, and criterion (ix): the development of land forms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features, and criterion (x): outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals.

Antarctica, he claims, would also appear to have the attributes to meet two other criteria; (vii): contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance, and criterion (x): contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.

Dr Mosley makes the point that Antarctica is ‘far and away the Earth’s major wilderness area’ (p12) and it is worth reading his definition of wilderness.

The advantages of listing are:

1) that whilst Antarctica is a protected area, listing on the World Heritage list would reduce the risk of future mining and of international conflict over mining;

2) Dr Mosley claims it would broaden the sense of ownership to the whole world instead of the 45 countries party to the Antarctic Treaty, or the original 12 signatories in 1959, or even the 28 who have voting rights.

At only $6.00, this is a must-have book for anyone interested in Antarctica and its preservation, in the process of World Heritage Listing or conservation in general. As a bonus there is a very useful map on the back cover showing the boundaries of territorial claims (and non-claimed areas), the extent of sea ice and the polar front.

The book may be purchased from the author; mosenett@optusnet.com.au

Kevin McCue

**Watch out for changes to the look of your Bulletin, starting next issue.**

Imagine how good Esther Gallant’s “flying ducks on stalks” would look in colour?

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**South Australia’s Heysen Trail with Ted Fleming** (continued from page 16)

He mentioned another piece of history incorporating Willochra Creek, near Kanya Station, which the third Earl of Carysfort’s son, Hugh Proby, ran. The station, like many of that era, was a small village, incorporating 70 families. The unfortunate Hugh Proby drowned in Willochra Creek while mustering sheep one stormy night in 1852.

Ted wound up his talk and slide presentation with views of the Elder Range en route to Wilpena Pound, the Pound surrounds, and Brachina Gorge where he referred to the fossils of great geological significance, some dating back more than 600 million years.

**Practicalities**

Ted also mentioned the practicalities. If you want to walk the Heysen Trail, there are two guide books, one for the northern section and one for the southern and the further north you go, the worse the track becomes. Transport needs to be organised mainly through private operators.

Water is a significant problem with very few permanent watercourses. The trail is closed from November 1 to April 30, also during bushfires and to meet farmers’ needs as in the lambing season. Accommodation varies from hotels and motels to shearsers’ quarters, shelters, and campsites.

Ted’s presentation, rich with anecdotes, history, scenery and information, reflected his fascination with the Heysen Trail in which he fulfilled his quest to complete the entire 1200km.

Judy Kelly

NPA BULLETIN—DECEMBER 2007
**PARKWATCH**

After more than 10 years of trawling the environmental literature to produce PARKWATCH for the Bulletin, Len Haskew has decided to relinquish the task for a fresh interpretation. We all thank Len for a magnificent effort. Ed.

**New parks for southern highlands**

In June, the [NSW] Government quietly announced the conclusion of a ten-year long assessment of State forests and Crown lands in the Southern Highlands. As a result it is protecting 17,000 ha as new national parks or nature reserves and a further 2,400 as state conservation areas. It also announced a further 22,400 ha of Crown lands will remain in public ownership, unlike in other areas of the State.

Attempts by NPA [NSW] and other groups to protect areas close to pine plantations or with mineral interests failed. There is no action on the draft recommendation to assess the conservation values of Crown leases covering Lake George.

In creating the small but important parks between Canberra and the Blue Mountains, Minister Koperberg said, "This will no doubt help to further stimulate the local economy in a way which was not previously possible while public lands sat vacant and unused."

_National Parks Journal_ October-November 2007

**Willows on the march**

Willows of one sort or another are native to almost every continent except Australia.

There are about 300 species worldwide, and most of them have a remarkable propensity to propagate from seed or broken bits of root or stem.

One of these willows, Grey Sallow Willow or Salix cinerea, is a native of the British Isles, Europe and western Asia.

_It has turned up in wetlands throughout much of Victoria for some time, and some years ago it was identified as a possible invader of the Victorian high country. It had become well established in a number of creeks and streams on the edge of the Alps._

When the fires of 2003 burnt the shrub and sphagnum moss layer from many alpine peat beds, they left an ideal peaty seedbed for Grey Sallow Willow to occupy.

The resulting post-fire invasion of tens of thousands of Grey Sallow Willows in Victoria's Alpine National Park has tested our capacity for weed threat assessment, effective monitoring and rapid response capabilities.

And it's not just the quantity of seedlings that is a concern. We are faced with a shrubby tree invading areas that have until now been largely treeless.

Once the invasion was identified, Government post-fire funding, bolstered by funds from the North-east Catchment Management Authority, enabled Parks Victoria to sign up teams of volunteers and hire a range of contractors to pull the young seedlings, or poison more advanced shrubs.

It is a big program, and has met with some success, but the identification last year of additional tens of thousands of seedlings in the Painters area of the alps has made it clear this threat will not be over soon.

_Parkwatch, September 2007_

**Wood supply questioned**

Dr Chris Beadle is a professional forest scientist based in Hobart. From 1997 to 2005 he was Manager of the Sustainable Management Program in the Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Production Forestry. These extracts from a recent article represent his views and not those of his employing organisation, CSIRO.

"Having observed the pulp mill debate in the media ... I am concerned that a very key issue is being neglected. Can Tasmania's production forests produce enough wood to supply a world-scale pulp mill for the next few decades? ..."

"The proposed mill will place demands on Tasmania's production forests that will potentially overshadow demands from other industries that rely on the same wood supply (such as sawn timber and veneer). Several of these not only add more value to the wood harvested, their products also lead to greater storage of carbon. Tasmania's production forests will have a more secure and sustainable future if they are managed in the first instance for such products rather than pulp.

"Current arguments against the mill are all about it being in the wrong place but it may also prove to be too large for the longer term benefit of Tasmania's forests and for a more balanced suite of forest and associated industries."  

*Update, September 2007*

**Letting down the marshes**

An article with the above title in the June-July issue of ECOS, the CSIRO journal, describes the demise of the Macquarie Marshes in NSW, an internationally significant wetland. The article highlights "a critical breakdown in habitat management across vested interests and the price of prioritising water extraction for commercial use above environmental allocations."

Although even in the days before climate change, the Macquarie River was calculated to yield between 400,000 and 475,000M3 of water, now about 700,000M3 is allocated to extractive use. The result of this unsustainable policy is, in the words of the article, that "Today the northern Macquarie Marshes are struggling to survive and the southern Macquarie Marshes are all but gone — a wasteland of cracked and broken earth, littered with blanched shells of freshwater mussels and bordered by the skeletons of river red gums whose dead branches no longer support the nests of migrating birds or shelter native fish."

Climate change could be "a new catalyst that could bring all parties together", but, in the words of Bill Johnson, Senior Scientific Officer for Wetlands and Rivers at DECC: "We have to start now, we don't have time any more. We are not very far from a point where those ecosystems in the Macquarie Marshes cannot be restored and protected. It is vital that we move now — today."

_The Coorong Bulletin_ September 2007

**Do parks owe us a living?**

An announcement by Fran Bailey, Federal Minister for Small Business and Tourism, that we should have more visitor facilities, including hotels, in our national parks, is a concern.

She was launching the *Natural Tourism Partnerships Action Plan* — a Federal strategy aimed at "finding new, innovative ways of making our parks financially sustainable (while) delivering a high quality visitor experience".

There is nothing really new in these expectations — they crop up every few years.

This time, however, the claim is made that increased tourism opportunities will help fund (to fight) the threats of climate change to our parks.

But the plan presents us with little evidence for this.

NPA BULLETIN—DECEMBER 2007
PARKWATCH continued

One case study for example, the Overland Track in Tasmania, is headlined as “funding conservation through improved visitor services”, but the supporting text more accurately points out that the track is “mostly self-funding its maintenance”.

Many other case studies cited show no evidence of funding returning to the park at all.

The impact of climate change on parks is a serious issue. It should not be trivialised as an opportunity for spin in the promotion of private tourist ventures.

The Federal Action Plan has come out at about the same time as the draft version of Victoria’s Nature-based Tourism Strategy. While many of the latter’s recommendations are good, there is an implication running through the document that our national parks aren’t doing their bit for the economy.

In fact, our natural areas already contribute a lot.

Three of our major parks (Grampians, Port Campbell and the Prom) are on record as contributing nearly $500 million annually to regional and state economies, largely through tourism. Grampians contributes some $246 million of this, for an annual park management investment of only $2.6 million.

In the face of climate change, we must spend more on protecting our parks, and that investment will be well rewarded.

But tourism projects must be demonstrably compatible with long-term conservation objectives, and developments like hotels are most appropriately located outside parks. update, August 2007

Emirates Blue Mountains Resort approved

Key concerns about the plan for the Emirates Resort were:
• establishing a fenced native wildlife sanctuary will isolate part of the Gardens of Stone National Park
• resort buildings would be within Wollemi National Park
• water from Wolgan River would be used
• bushwalker access to the Glow Worm Tunnel needed to be maintained
• and other bushland needed protection.

While approving the resort proposal in a national park creates an alarming precedent for the future, the NSW Government conceded it was “an extraordinary circumstance which is unlikely to be repeated in other national parks in NSW”. Following negotiations with Colong Foundation for Wilderness and the NSW National Parks Association (NPA), Emirates and the government agreed to:
• guarantee public access to landlocked parts of the Gardens of Stone National Park and the Glow Worm Tunnel from the Wolgan Valley; transfer Emirates-owned crown land outside the resort area to national park; guarantee base flows to the Wolgan River; establish an expert panel chaired by the NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change to oversee the wildlife conservancy; ban horse riding in the National Park; undertake public consultation on an amendment to the Plan of Management before constructing the feral-proof fence for the wildlife conservancy; and review public involvement and transparency in future national park leasing processes in NSW.

Wild Spring 2007

Macquarie Island news

Follow-up to the September 2007 PARKWATCH item on rabbit eradication on Macquarie Island.

The plan has been described as “a lethally efficient military operation”. During its first phase, expected to begin in winter 2009, helicopters will distribute poison in the form of cereal-based pellets. This will eradicate the rats and mice and more than 95 per cent of the rabbits. In the second stage, hunting teams on the ground will eradicate surviving rabbits using techniques including shooting, trapping, fumigating burrows and the use of dogs. The field teams will remain on the island for four years to ensure that there is no longer a breeding population.

At least 22 bird species are expected to benefit from the eradication operation, with 12 of these considered threatened. However, four bird species are at risk from the use of helicopters and bait. The poison will also pollute lakes, pools and streams on the island. It is feared that the areas at present untouched by rabbit grazing will be destroyed before the eradication plan gets under way in two years’ time. The island’s landscape will take many years to recover once the rodents are gone, and some areas may never recover.

Wild Spring 2007

The Australian Weeds Strategy

The Australian Weeds Strategy provides a framework to establish consistent guidance for all parties, and identifies priorities for weed management across the nation with the aim of minimising the impact of weeds on Australia’s environmental, economic and social assets. The Australian Weeds Strategy emphasises the importance of preventing new weeds from establishing and the need to respond quickly to incursions.

The Australian Weeds Strategy is a vital part of Australia’s integrated approach to national biosecurity, and complements other existing and new national strategies, such as those for terrestrial vertebrate pests and marine pests. The Australian Weeds Strategy is based on seven key principles:

1. Weed management is an essential and integral part of the sustainable management of natural resources for the benefit of the economy, the environment, human health and amenity.
2. Combating weed problems is a shared responsibility that requires all parties to have a clear understanding of their roles.
3. Good science underpins the effective development, monitoring and review of weed management strategies.
4. Prioritisation of and investment in weed management must be informed by a risk management approach.
5. Prevention and early intervention are the most cost-effective techniques for managing weeds.
6. Weed management requires coordination among all levels of government in partnership with industry, land and water managers and the community, regardless of tenure.
7. Building capacity across government, industry, land and water managers and the community is fundamental to effective weed management.

The Australian Weeds Strategy 2007

Compiled by Len Haskew

NPA work party, Stockyard arboretum, May 2007. Photo Martin Chalk

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General Meetings
Third Thursday of the month (not December or January)
8:00pm
Uniting Church hall
56 Scrivener Street
O'Connor

National Parks Association Calendar

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<td>Gudgenby Bush Regeneration</td>
<td>Sat 8</td>
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<td>NPA ACT Christmas Party</td>
<td>Sun 9</td>
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Further details
1 Yankee Hat carpark 10:00am, Clive Hurlstone 6288 7592 (h)
   0407 783 422 (mob).
2 GBRG Christmas Party is on 8 December.

General Meeting
Thursday 21 February

A year of orchids
Tony Wood: Nature photographer and outdoor enthusiast.
An introduction to the diversity of terrestrial orchids to be found in our local region, including some that are considered rare and endangered.

General Meeting
Thursday 20 March

Elephants, elephants, elephants
Esther Gallam: NPA member, and popular speaker at our meetings with her interesting adventures.
Both Zimbabwe and Botswana estimate populations of 35 000 elephants. In three weeks we saw hundreds, along with 38 other mammal species and 100 kinds of birds. We had time to watch animal behavior and to discuss it with our knowledgeable local guides. We also visited rural villages and spectacular Victoria Falls.

The association welcomes the following new members:
Peter Anderson-Smith
John Mahlberg
Catherine and Chris Ikin
Angela Delhunty
Cheryl Hislop
Maria Mulvaney and Susie MacLeman,
Liz and Ian Harman
Wayne and Judy Ryan
Mike Hettinger and Donna Trucillo
Jennifer Engle
We look forward to seeing you at association activities.

NPA ACT Bulletin
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GPO Box 544
CANBERRA ACT 2601

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