

Wetlands, blackwater, drought!

The Ginninderra Catch-Up newsletter



Ginninderra Creek struggled with the hot, dry spell at the end of 2019. At Umbagog, water stopped flowing across the rock bars at the Axe Grinding Grooves and at the Stepping Stones (photo above) for more than 4 weeks, only recommencing after the downpour on 16 January 2020. *Photo: John Fitz Gerald.*

Concerns along Ginninderra Creek

FISH KILL

'At the Ginninderra Creek stepping-stones of Umbagog District Park in Latham, dead fish litter the water. Most of these are carp. Dead redfin have also been spotted. The immediate cause of fish death is lack of oxygen due to a blackwater event. ...'

[Read the whole of this article by Dr Caroline Wenger in the attached pdf file.](#)

Carp are also reported dying at Giralang Pond, for a similar reason. The EPA were contacted, and responded: "This has happened at a number of small ponds across

Canberra. Fish ecologists have inspected Ginninderra Creek, and City rangers will clean up as soon as practical."

GCG is in discussion with the government about current water management practices. The issue will be discussed at the GCG Members' meeting on Monday 3 February.

WATER EXTRACTION FROM GINNINDERRA CREEK

GCG landcarers have observed contractors pumping water from Ginninderra Creek for use at Ginninderry, as was also commented on in a letter to the *Canberra Times* by P.R. Temple of Macquarie on 23 January.

Bernie Bugden (GCG's acting Executive Officer) has contacted the parties involved, and the response received will be discussed at the Bush on the Boundary meeting on 5 February. In essence, the response says that water is drawn from development-site ponds and basins first, and that 'Water is taken from natural waterways as a last resort, and always under specific approval from the EPA ... The recent rainfall events on 16 and 20 January have topped up the site ponds and basins to provide sufficient water for dust suppression and construction activities for the foreseeable future (roughly 2 months), with approximately 20–25 megalitres estimated on-site as a result of recent rain events.'

And here is their response to the letter in the newspaper:

<https://ginninderry.com/planning-and-community/news-and-views/canberra-times-water-waste-letter-editor/>

From the Convenor and Executive Officer

I hope everyone is well. It has been an intense start to the year around Australia, and many of the articles in this newsletter show the impact of fires, drought, heatwaves and intense storms on landcare activities. Landcare ACT is currently looking into how it can partner with other organisations for disaster recovery. More to come.

I wish Karissa well, in her new role as Chief Executive Officer of Landcare ACT. It will be sad to see Karissa leave, particularly for the long-standing achievements and relationships that have been established in community landcare. Fortunately, Karissa will not be too far away and will still be involved at a Territory and regional level in advocating landcare and addressing the range of important issues. Bernie will be the acting Executive Officer until recruitment action is finalised.

2020 is going to be an exciting year, particularly as we have funding to achieve outcomes that our members have long been asking for. We recently were advised that we were successful in all the Community Environment grants applications we submitted and a significant amount of the Adopt-a-Park grants. We are also strengthening our relationship with the ACT Government – EPSDD and TCCS. We

have around 15 key events planned in 2020 related to Healthy Waterways and Urban Landcare. I am confident that the catchment groups will be provided ongoing sustainable funding (noting that the Canberra Liberals earlier this year pledged a 4-year funding commitment).

I am looking forward to working with you in the coming year. Please contact me anytime if you would like to discuss the work program for GCG and your landcare group.

Santo Lolicato, Convenor

GCG STAFF CHANGES

This will likely be the last GCG newsletter piece from me as the GCG Executive Officer. I will be starting a new role as CEO of Landcare ACT from mid-February. I have also been appointed as the Community Representative on the ACT and Region Catchment Management Coordination Group (which Ian Falconer previously chaired and which is now chaired by Maxine Cooper). So while I am leaving GCG, I hope to continue to be in touch with most of you in my new roles.

I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to work with a group of such dedicated and inspiring people over the last 7 years with GCG. A big thank you to all for making my experience with GCG so satisfying. It's quite incredible reflecting on what we have achieved together. I have no doubt that GCG will continue to be a leader in supporting local people to maintain and improve special places of the ACT Region.

Welcome to Bernie Bugden who has commenced as Acting Executive Officer from 8 January to 13 March working 1.5 days per week. Bernie will support Sandy and I during the transition period as the new EO incumbent takes over. Work priorities include general support to member groups; management of current projects, operational budget and contract commitments; support to Executive and General Member committee meetings; charring Ginninderry Bush on the Boundary; supporting Sandy and I in a smooth hand-over to the new EO. It is wonderful that Bernie has been able to step in to assist in this way.

POSITION VACANT: Please distribute through your networks

GCG is now recruiting for a new Executive Officer to manage the daily operations of this leading community-driven environmental organisation in the ACT. This is a rare opportunity to support, connect and lead local communities in maintaining and improving the health of Ginninderra Catchment and surrounding environments. For more information see:

https://nrmjobs.com.au/jobs/2020/20004693/Executive_Officer_30_hours_per_week?state=ACT&category=ALL&search=&page=

Applications close on 5 February.

Please distribute through your networks.

INCREASED FUNDING TO ACHIEVE GCG MEMBER GOALS

GCG has recently been awarded 11 new grants that directly respond to member groups' expressed needs, and value-add to volunteer landcare work across the Catchment. Six Commonwealth grants through the Community Environmental Program have been awarded to GCG for landcare activities. The successful projects include: two grassland restoration projects in priority areas, three projects focused on restoring waterways and natural areas, and one environmental weed control project. Thanks to Andrew Leigh's and Alicia Payne's offices for their assistance in the application processes.

Five ACT Government Adopt-a-Park grants are also being sponsored through GCG. These are to support activities associated with the lower Ginninderra Creek Groups and Giralang Ponds Landcare Group as well as the two new GCG Member Groups – Friends of Wangara Parks (Aranda) and Maribyrnong Community Climate Action Group (Kaleen). Another successful project in this funding scheme was a promotions kit to assist the community education work of GCG across the Catchment.

Karissa, Bernie and Fiona have been working with volunteers, particularly Ann Milligan and Rosemary Blemings, to develop a calendar of events to achieve the outcomes associated with the above grants. This events calendar, which has been distributed to members, also includes activities associated with the existing ACT Government projects focused on stewardship and waterways education. It will be a big year for GCG!

*Karissa Preuss,
(almost former) Executive Officer*

Waterwatch news

FROM INSPIRATION TO IMPACT

Bruno (for GCG and Yass River) and Martin (for Southern ACT Catchment Group), will have a Waterwatch stand at this event on Thursday 30 January, being held at the Ann Harding Centre, University of Canberra. They will be showing what Waterwatch can do for pre-schoolers.

News from GCG member groups

CRACE

Crace Landcare Group will be holding its annual **Clean Up Australia Day event on Sunday 1 March** from 9 am, at Crace Recreation Park, Narden Street Crace.

Meet near the children's playground. Rubbish bags, litter claws, gloves provided. Morning tea will be provided at 10 am.

*Fleur Leary,
Convenor, Crace Landcare Group*

THE PINNACLE, WEETANGERA/HAWKER

In a horror summer that has us struggling to cope with the effects of the bushfire smoke and golfball-sized hail, it is the prolonged hot weather and the absence of rain that are having the greatest impact on the reserve. We can see mature trees dropping limbs and young saplings completely dying off as the months of little or no rain take their toll.

The impact on the reserve's animals is no less severe, but this is mitigated by the fact that our dam is still in good shape and people have rallied round to put out drinking water around the reserve. Group members have been coordinating through the Water Our Wildlife facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1320302384840355/>) to put out water containers of various sizes to cater for animals and insects. In the meantime, we're all hoping for some real rain to bring the reserve back to life and put an end to the bushfires still active in NSW and now down in Namadgi also!

In the meantime, Len has been busy raising seedlings to revegetate the burned areas in Weetangera paddock, with his latest effort producing well over 300 Red-leg Grass plants. All he has to do now is figure out how to stop the rabbits digging up his seedlings. 😊

In the absence of weeds to pull or spray, Warren has also been busy revamping our website, including a new flora and fauna portal that points to all the species lists we have. Most of these are also new pages – sourced from the Canberra Nature Map where Alison Milton (mainly) and a few other keen field naturalists and photographers make regular contributions of new findings. When you add them all up there are several hundred native species occupying or visiting the Reserve. This includes 109 native bird species and 186 native plant species. Not bad for a reserve that used to be mostly old sheep paddocks.

*John Brannan,
Convenor, Friends of The Pinnacle (FOTPIN)*

ARANDA BUSHLAND, ARANDA

Our paddocks seemed to escape the brunt of that hailstorm on 20 January (judging by the degree of snow-gum leaf loss) and the seedlings were mostly below the level of their tree-guards, so well-protected anyway.

It did provide a reasonable amount of precipitation, to put some into our dry dams, (and about a foot (30 cm) of water into our largest). Worst would have been a downpour onto our bared fragile ground.

In the last couple of months we keener ones have supplemented the monthly Sunday workparties, with briefer mini-parties every other Sunday (weather or fire-bans permitting). This round, the smoke deterred some. Of course, a priority was to water

our seedlings.

We were shocked by the unexpected death in hospital, just last month, of keen Committee-member, Ian Loiterton, whose overflow funeral attendance attested to his popularity.

*Jim Arnold,
Coordinator, Friends of Aranda Bushland*

SUTTON, NSW

Please join us at our first Landcare meeting for 2020, on **Tuesday 11 February**, at the Sutton Primary School, from 7.30 pm.

The meeting will start with a (brief) Annual General Meeting, followed by a presentation by Dr Lachlan Ingram from the University of Sydney, on better understanding of the factors (i.e. vegetation, soil, landscape, climate and management) that drive the survival of African Love Grass (ALG) across the Monaro, which may allow better predictions where future spread may likely occur.

There may be potential for his research team to undertake some research in the Sutton area, as future work will include better/earlier detection of ALG using a range of technologies. Sites outside of the Monaro would be valuable for calibration and validation.

*Arnold Dekker
President, Sutton Landcare Group*

MT PAINTER, COOK

Since the last Ginninderra Catchup newsletter, FOMP members have been busy, mostly with weeding. We have encountered more snakes than usual, maybe because they are easier to see with fewer places for them to hide. We have twice watered the ground cover plants we put in last May in the Wildflower Triangle and, after the hailstorm, removed many shredded plant guards. Luckily we had a supply of old guards of a much more robust construction than the damaged ones and we were able to re-guard most of the plants.



Damaged guards (left) and replacement guards (right).

There was also some other damage, including a water cube punctured with four holes and a fence overwhelmed by debris that washed off the overgrazed horse paddock next door. But there was also good news: the dam has once again got water in it; maybe the frogs will return.



Von Harrington and the punctured water cube



Fence weighed down with debris

At the beginning of December, Suzi Bond led a butterfly walk on Mount Painter. It was a windy day and not favourable weather for butterflies to be flying. We saw only five species compared with the 10 we saw a couple of years ago when conditions were perfect for butterflies. A few days later, Years 3 and 4 students from Macquarie Primary School walked to the summit. It was still windy, so windy we couldn't hear ourselves talk and a lot of hats went flying.

Some of us were involved in the 30-year celebration of Parkcare's existence, consultation about the Draft Canberra Nature Park Management Plan, and our annual sunset celebration of a year's work which we held inside for the first time because of the smoke.

FOMP's next work party will be in the morning of **Sunday, 16 February**, time, place and task to be determined closer to the time in response to prevailing conditions and problems. Details will be posted on our Facebook page.

Sarah Hnatiuk

Convenor, Friends of Mt Painter, friends.of.mount/painter@gmail.org

MULLIGANS FLAT, FORDE

We hold work parties on the 2nd Wednesday of the month, from 9.30 to 12pm. Other volunteer opportunities such as wildlife monitoring, and helping with research projects and public programs, are available from time to time. Please email FriendsofMF@hotmail.com for further details.

The summer has seen the Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary closed on Total Fire Ban days and for some of January due to high fire danger, so volunteering has been restricted to turtle patrols and helping on twilight tours when possible. The

Woodlands and Wetlands Trust put in place alternative arrangements to move turtles across the fence when the usual volunteer Turtle patrol roster has had to be suspended. In response to the extremely dry conditions two watering stations have been placed within the Sanctuary for native wildlife.

The Friends group has our first working party for the year on **Wednesday 11 February** with weed removal the most likely activity – we're hoping it's not too hot or smokey. The Trust has appointed a fabulous Volunteer Coordinator and we are looking forward to new volunteer opportunities in the Sanctuary as well as training and development.

Stay tuned for news of the progress of the Mulligans Flat Woodland Learning Centre in Throsby; construction began this month with an expected Spring opening date.

*Julia Raine,
Convenor, Friends of Mulligans Flat*

JARRAMLEE PARK, DUNLOP

Our Landcare group finished off 2019 with a Xmas lunch with members and partners, which was well attended and enjoyed by all, including a Bombe Alaska!

Three landcare group convenors of the four groups affected by the Adopt-a-Park grant – Umbagog, Macgregor and Jarramlee Park – held a meeting on 14 January to discuss the issues raised by this proposal. The fourth group, North Belconnen Landcare group, was not represented at this meeting but the convenor will be updated with the results.

We will be holding our first Landcare Group meeting for 2020 on **Tuesday 4 February**, and will discuss the issues we have and the effects of the drought, and whether we can put in more plants in the floodway where dead bushes and trees were removed. Sadly, we lost several plants that were put in early Spring as there was some difficulty with watering. Otherwise we have plenty of weeds to suppress, and more dead bushes and trees around Jarramlee Pond to get out. So the work will continue.

Following our report regarding a street tree swamped with mulch, against and high around the trunk, Allan McLean requested we attend the matter in the absence of available government resources. This was undertaken and Allan suggested an ACT-wide community information exercise needs to be undertaken.

*Pamela Fawke
Convenor, Jarramlee Park Landcare*

MT ROGERS, FRASER-SPENCE-MELBA

We will resume our customary 4th Sunday and 1st Monday working bee sessions on **Monday February 3rd at 08.30am**, meeting at the Wickens Place carpark, unless

there is a Total Fire Ban or the day's forecast is for temperatures above 35 degrees. For other news, see our latest blog post at mtrogerslandcare.blogspot.com.

*Rosemary Blemings,
Convenor, Mt Rogers Landcare Group*

NORTH BELCONNEN

Over this past month the **Saturday group** has remained active each week looking after our little (much loved) grassland patches. The kids have done a great job watering the dry, cracked ground and because of their care most of our plants are doing relatively well. Their help also enabled us to harvest several species of native wildflower seeds from the Betty Davis patch with the intent to sow them on the nearby playground patch in Autumn. We also did weeding across the patches, and with several new faces to the group provided guidance. We are very lucky to have a wide range of ages in our Saturday group from 5 to 75 and a huge thanks to all.



Photos by Yvette Perine.

NBLC Wednesday Landcare for Littlies and home-schooled children – This group has been in recess through December and January but is re-starting this week and will continue to meet regularly on most Wednesdays unless it is just too hot to venture out. Our start time is 8.30 and we meet for about one hour and will be doing watering, weeding, mulching, and sowing some native seeds in the autumn especially if we get adequate rainfall. New members are always welcome. This is a small group

and we have a **Facebook sub-group called Wednesday Meet-up** rather than having all our arrangements on the main face book page. If anyone is interested in this group please let me know by emailing hodgkinson12@bigpond.com for the details. If you are not on Facebook I can just send a text or email to sort our arrangements.

We also focus on music and singing landcare songs and have been invited to another **Nursing Home in February**. Our visit to the RSL Nursing Home at Lyneham was well received and a positive experience for the children and the residents. The RSL Nursing Home at Curtin has now invited us to come and share our music with them.

*Yvette Perine (Saturday)
& Lenore Hodgkinson (Wednesday),
Convenors, North Belconnen Landcare Group*

Other happenings in this region

'FROM LANDSCAPE TRANSFORMATION TO ECOSYSTEM COLLAPSE' – KREBS LECTURE, 18 February 6.30 pm, Ann Harding Conference Centre, University of Canberra

'With unprecedented bushfire destruction that has devastated a vast amount of Australian landscape, there is no denying that both nationally and globally we are subject to major transformations in land use and vegetation cover. In his talk, David Lindenmayer will explore the new perspectives on the environmental impacts of multiple landscape transformations, and will reveal new insights from two of his long-term studies in south-eastern Australia. *Complimentary drinks and canapes available from 7:30 pm. Book (SOON) at <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/from-landscape-transformation-to-ecosystem-collapse-tickets-89938152435?aff=ebdssbdestsearch>*

'SUPPORTING POLLINATORS' WORKSHOP, Saturday 22 February

Bees, Butterflies and Birds: Maximising Biodiversity by Supporting Pollinators.

We acknowledge the impact of fires and drought across Australia on widespread communities. Many native forests have been burnt that are vital for the health and well-being of native bees, European Honey bees and pollinators of many species that are crucial for biodiversity and healthy ecosystems. It is now even more important for us to plant for and maintain our urban gardens and parklands to protect our bees, butterflies, birds and local wildlife.

ACT for Bees, Landcare ACT and the Friends of the Australian National Botanic Gardens will run a free workshop on 'Bees, Butterflies, Birds: Maximising Biodiversity by Supporting Pollinators' on Saturday 22 February 2020 from 9 am to 12.30 pm.

There are limited places available and so if you're keen to attend, please register immediately at the [Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/bees-) link (<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/bees->

[butterflies-birds-maximising-biodiversity-by-supporting-pollinators-tickets-91570779667](#)). Many thanks to the Rotary Club of Hall for their support.

Ginninderra Catchment Group connects, supports and leads local communities to improve the health of Ginninderra Creek and surrounding environments.

ACT and Region Frogwatch Program and the Ginninderra and Yass components of Upper Murrumbidgee Waterwatch operate from the GCG office. Email landcare@ginninderralandcare.org.au

Website: <https://ginninderralandcare.org.au/>

Office: Kippax Health Centre, Holt. Phone: 02 6278 3309

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ginninderra Catchment Group, Frogwatch and Waterwatch (Ginninderra Ck & Yass R) are grateful for support from the
ACT Government, Landcare ACT and
ACT Upper Murrumbidgee Waterwatch



