

The Scribbly Gum

Summer 2016



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partnerships caring for
our natural environment*



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A word from the Director



2016 Bush Friendly Garden - (Left to right) Heather Tomlinson - Senior Manager EPSDD, Annie Lane - Executive Director EPSDD, and Community Education Officers - Janelle Dennis and Phil Selmes

Community volunteers working in ACT parks and reserves are critical to achieving the objectives of conservation in our city. Can I share my admiration and gratitude to all ParkCarers for another year of extraordinary effort in and around our nature reserves.

This year's Scribbly Gum publication highlights the collaborative effort that is ParkCare and Landcare in the ACT. The working partnerships that have been activated between ParkCarers and Landcarers, the ACT Government and other community and volunteer organisations are particularly notable. The efforts of weed and erosion control, planting, trail maintenance, heritage management, facilities upgrades and public engagement have included contributions from Conservation Volunteers Australia, Friends of Grasslands, the Catchment Group coordination of the Green Army, Greening Australia, Australian Defence Force Academy, Canberra Institute of Technology, recreation user groups, Scouts and a number of schools.

The stories shared are personal and collective, recognising the social and health benefits that volunteering in the environment can create for individuals. In a study undertaken by Volunteering Australia in 2015, 95% of volunteers said that volunteering is related to feelings of wellbeing. I wonder how this figure relates to environmental volunteers, especially after a year of high rainfall facilitating the rapid growth of environmental weeds! Hopefully the joy of exceptional pockets of spring wildflowers and strong and healthy local plantings in our reserves will compensate for the weed management challenges that lay ahead.

The sightings and reports of orchids, wildflowers, butterflies, reptiles and birds from the volunteer community this year has been amazing. This enthusiasm is shared by volunteers with Parks and Conservation Service (PCS) staff and increasingly shared via the use of social media and online citizen science platforms. I commend volunteers' willingness to embrace the unique Canberra inspired Smartphone application, Canberra Nature Map, and contribute to building knowledge of biodiversity in our bush capital. Photography, plant identification and rare and unusual discoveries are on the rise in the ACT with the assistance of such technological platforms. The adoption of these online forums presents an opportunity to introduce new, emerging and visiting citizen scientists to our parks and reserves.

On behalf of all staff in the Parks and Conservation Service, I wish you all well for a happy, healthy and safe New Year and the Service looks forward to working with you all in 2017.



Daniel Iglesias
Director
Parks and
Conservation Service

News from the Community Volunteer Coordinators



ParkCare and Volunteer Coordinator Phil Selmes

Urban Community and Volunteer Group Officer Nick Bakker with a Weed Swap participant

The team of ACT Government staff assisting and supporting the ParkCare and Landcare volunteer community includes PCS District Rangers, the PCS ParkCare and Volunteer Coordinator (Phil Selmes), the PCS ParkCare Support Officer (Craig Wainwright) and the newly created Urban Community and Volunteer Groups Officer (Nick Bakker).

This newly created position sits within the Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate. Nick Bakker, who has a background in environmental management and community engagement, was recently appointed to work with volunteer and community groups working in urban parks and open space. In addition to the traditional Landcare groups, Nick works with groups such as the Lyneham Food Forest Commons, who provide a space for the local community to grow food by employing sustainable organic and permaculture techniques, and the Tocumwal Housing Precinct Landcare Group in O'Connor.

As a team we work to support, promote and value the role of volunteers in our environment. Also supporting our ParkCare and Landcare community are the ACT Regional Landcare Facilitators and the Catchment Group coordinators. Landcare in the ACT is a busy and active space and there is plenty of work to do! In September this year a number of ParkCarers and Landcarers represented the ACT at the National Landcare Awards and Conference in Melbourne.

As Alison McLeod's article later in this newsletter demonstrates, the cohort of successful national award nominees from the ACT was impressive. Unfortunately none were successful in bringing home a national award this time, but all did the Bush Capital proud.

Without the volunteers, protection and enhancement of our natural environment within the ACT would not be possible. At the National Landcare Conference the value placed against volunteers was discussed in an effort to measure the economic contribution of volunteers to the Landcare effort. Volunteer effort was measured at being worth \$50 per hour. Given PCS regularly records over 18,000 hours of volunteer time per year, this equates to an effort equivalent in value to approximately \$900,000. We expect that the actual recorded hours is much higher than this as the figures recorded by PCS does not account for the contribution of all groups working in ACT parks and reserves.

As such I think we could confidently say volunteers make a contribution of over a million dollars a year to environmental management in the ACT.

Earlier this year, ParkCare groups were invited to be involved in a review of the Canberra Nature Park Plan of Management. Two separate sessions were held to capture the views, ideas and issues of ParkCarers and recreation user groups in relation to the continued management and promotion of the 36 reserves that comprise Canberra Nature Park.

The draft plan of management is due to be released for public comment in 2017.

Community members and volunteers were also invited to attend a number of Fringe Forums run throughout the year. These Fringe Forums aim to address the land management interests of the community and help PCS staff to provide up to date information on land management projects and programs. Some of the topics covered by the forums this year included:

- fire in the Landscape
- rabbit control in the ACT
- PCS wildlife program
- partners on country.

Other projects that continue to involve volunteers in ACT parks and reserves include the Glossy Black Cockatoo project, the Enhancing Grasslands Project, the enhancement and closure of unsustainable walking and cycling tracks in Canberra Nature Park and the creation of the Glenburn heritage trail in Kowen. The Friends of Jerrabomberra Wetlands have also been working with the Woodland and Wetlands Trust to create a young rangers program.

Volunteers from the Australian Native Plant Society, ParkCare and Naturally Landscapes have also worked with PCS and TCCS staff again this year to deliver the Bush Friendly Garden exhibit at Floriade and the bi-annual weed swap program. Both programs help to spread the message that replacing garden escapees (invasive environmental weeds) with non invasive natives in suburban gardens is good for our bush, native wildlife and for our water resources. Both Steve Taylor, PCS Senior Weeds Officer and Jenny Conolly, TCCS Pest and Weeds Officer are working hard to raise public awareness of some of the new and emerging environmental weeds in the ACT that have the potential escape into the bush.

Craig Wainwright, ParkCare Support Officer has also worked regularly with volunteers to see an increased uptake in the use of the Collector Application to map weeds and tracks by volunteers. This marks a new and exciting era in volunteering and recognises the amazing capacity and skills of volunteers to contribute real-time data to the day to day management of reserves. The data gleaned from these efforts contribute to ACT Government budget predictions and plans of management for the management of weeds and tracks.

Craig's engagement with community volunteers, inmates from the Alexander Maconochie Centre, schools, scouts and other groups, and his partnership with the Green Army teams, has seen significant improvements in community engagement in our reserve system. We will all miss Craig's energy and incredible work ethic as he takes on a new role as the Regional Operations Coordinator in the rural district of PCS. Craig will commence his new role in January 2017 (see Craig's farewell note below).

On the topic of change, the merge of PCS into the Environment Division of the Environment and Planning Directorate (now the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate) in July 2016 brought new and improved alliances with our conservation policy and conservation research colleagues. At the same time, long-term manager of the Community and Visitor Programs, Odile Arman, announced her retirement from PCS.

Odile Arman began as a ranger with PCS in 1984 and worked with the ACT Government for 32 years. She was one of the first female rangers to join PCS and is the longest serving PCS female employee. Odile was well known to a number of the long-time volunteers working with PCS and was instrumental in the early establishment of the Friends of Tidbinbilla. A big thank you to her for all her efforts that have seen many changes over the years.

On behalf of your fellow ACT Government community volunteer coordinators we wish you a great and safe Christmas and look forward to a new year when we can do it all again. Congratulations to everyone for another successful year.

Phil Selmes
ParkCare and Volunteer Coordinator
E: Philip.Selmes@act.gov.au

Craig Wainwright
ParkCare Support Officer
E: Craig.Wainwright@act.gov.au

Nick Bakker
Urban Community and Volunteer
Groups Officer
E: Nicholas.Bakker@act.gov.au

A farewell message from the ParkCare Support Officer



ParkCare Support Officer Craig Wainwright and Waltraud Pix - Friends of Mount Majura

As the ParkCare Support Officer I work in special places with like-minded people - a community of volunteers who are committed to enhancing our natural environment, protecting natural values and celebrating the wonders of the natural world. It is truly an inspiring position that I value greatly and have worked hard for three years to develop into a role that provides meaningful support to our volunteer community. While I could happily remain in this position, I have decided to take on a new role in 2017 as the Regional Operations Coordinator in the rural district. The decision was based on my desire to broaden my experiences as a ranger and become more familiar with the remote areas of Canberra's natural environment.

As I depart this position I would like to thank the many volunteers I have worked with and especially those who have encouraged and supported me in this role. I have thoroughly enjoyed the histories, stories and knowledge you have shared with me. It has developed me into a better ranger. All the best and I look forward to catching up with you as we cross paths in 2017.



ParkCare Support Officer Craig Wainwright with Friends of Mount Majura

Craig Wainwright
ParkCare Support Officer
E: Craig.Wainwright@act.gov.au

Friends of Aranda Bushland



Attacking the St John's Wort. Photo, Kevin McCue

Flooding in the Aranda Snowgums. Photo, Keith Pantlin

Friends of Aranda Bushland (FOAB) have had a busy year as usual, with great support from our rangers, particularly ParkCare Support Officer Craig Wainwright, who has been unfailingly prompt and efficient.

The former rural block 1550, which adjoins our Snowgums reserve, was resumed by the Land Development Authority and transferred to the control of Canberra Nature Park in February 2014. However it has not yet been fully incorporated into the reserve system. It has been identified as having very high conservation value and the intention is to bring it into the park as an 'Advanced Offset' in the future, but that could be as much as ten years away. Meanwhile PCS, with our help, manage it as befits its value.

It is a beautiful and varied piece of bushland which we are delighted to have access to. Apart from the paddocks of the former farm, with their ancient Yellow Box *Eucalyptus melliodora* trees, there is a large area of wetland (particularly wet this year!) and beside it a steep, stony escarpment whose summit is covered in lichen and tough, low-growing species. Aboriginal artefacts have been found there and it seems likely that it was used as a camp by the earliest residents.

We have conducted several weeding parties in this block and have also begun designing a walk through the area, with interpretive signs at points of interest.

Another change this year was the complete removal, thanks to Craig, of a stand of Radiata Pine *Pinus radiata* from the bushland near Bindubi Street.

Planted about 1970 by persons unknown, the trees have been a nuisance ever since as they spread wildings throughout the area. We now have a clear patch and our intention is to replace the missing exotic pines with Black Cypress Pine *Callitris enlicheri* using seed collected from a stand further up the slope.

Our erosion control operations have progressed steadily. Using branches and logs from some of the felled *Pinus radiata*, we have built leaky weirs in our main erosion channel and along its edges. We are now turning our attention to the erosion gully in the former block 1550.

Because of the enormous amount of rain over the winter, the whole of the lower part of Aranda Bushland was flooded for weeks, but the bushland as a whole has benefited. The orchids have been wonderful this spring. We held a well-attended orchid walk in October, and several members had great success spotting orchids for Michael Mulvaney's recent online Fire-Orchid survey. The hazard reduction burn conducted in autumn on the upper slopes of the bushland resulted in the disappearance of many orchids, but we hope they will come back next spring.

At the moment we are keeping busy with the flush of spring weeds with our team of helpers making great progress on them.

Jenny Andrews,
Convenor - Friends of the Aranda Bushland
E: friendsofarandabushland@act.gov.au

Friends of Black Mountain



A guided walk by Friends of Black Mountain

Friends of Black Mountain (FoBM) activities contributed to the aims for conservation and promotion of Black Mountain's biodiversity.

FoBM weeding work parties are on the first Saturday of each month. Even though wet weather cancelled three this year, we are gradually spiralling up the mountain. About 30 wonderful weeders volunteered 385 hours and removed more than 4360 woody weeds.

FoBM also had help from Molonglo Catchment Group (MCG), the Green Army and the Parks and Conservation Service (PCS) for the weeds that were just too woody for our volunteers with their hand-saws!

There was very positive feedback on the exhibition 'Black Mountain Nature Reserve: a Special Place' at the Australian National Botanic Gardens visitor centre early in 2016, along with guided walks in the reserve. We are building on that positive feedback with a Heritage Grant in the coming year for interpretative signs and information about plants near the Woodland Track area.

FoBM participated in a display at Jamison Plaza. Visitors enjoyed the display, the quizzes and free leaflets and bought publications. As a result, several people came to our events and became members of FoBM.

Articles about Black Mountain flora by Dr Rosemary Purdie were published. We thank Australian Native Plant Society and PCS for contributing to printing costs and for sufficient copies of our brochures, which are very popular.

Approximately 200 people came on our popular walks and talks last year, we had good publicity on radio, the PCS Explore program of guided walks, the Conservation Council and newspapers.

FoBM's Heritage Festival talks and walks were well attended. Special thanks to Rosemary Purdie and Geoffrey Dabb for superb talks and to the guides.



A wonderful weeder cutting and dabbing. Photo, Jean Geue

The 45th annual Spring Wildflower Ramble continued the tradition established by Dr Nancy Burbidge and George Chippendale. Our warm thanks to the organisations involved and to the guides who took more than 80 ramblers in five separate groups in different directions. Ramblers said they were delighted by the range and intricate beauty of the wildflowers.

Black Mountain Nature Reserve was declared in July 1970. The Summit Walk, a cooperative project between the ACT Government and the Australian National Botanic Gardens, was officially opened in July 2000. An anniversary walk in July, led by guides from FoBM and the Friends of the Gardens, but next year may need to remind walkers to bring 'winter woollies'!

We are now planning a Black Mountain forum in 2018 and the reserve 50th anniversary celebrations in 2020.

Like other ParkCare groups, FoBM was busy in October and November with guided spring walks, vegetation surveys, Frogwatch and BirdBlitz. Vegetation was lush this year after having the second wettest September on record. Frogs croaked near deeper dams and ponds.

FoBM contributed to the draft Canberra Nature Park Reserve Management Plan, including an updated profile for Black Mountain Nature Reserve and list of more than 650 plants observed on Black Mountain.

Thank you to everyone in FoBM, MCG, PCS, FNAC, ANBG and Friends of ANBG, ANPS, NPA, Heritage Unit, and other organisations for the part they played in making this a very enjoyable year for FoBM. Especially warmly thanks our valuable botanic advisers, and the guides of our walks—Dr Rosemary Purdie, Isobel Crawford, Michael Doherty, Dr Michael Mulvaney, Jean Geue and Matthew Plaistowe.

Linda Beveridge
Convenor - Friends of Black Mountain
E: friendsofblackmountain@gmail.com
W: www.molonglocatchment.com.au/friends_of_black_mountain.htm

Friends of Glenburn

The Glenburn Precinct in the Kowen forest is now a registered ACT Heritage site with the Friends of Glenburn working collaboratively with help from ACT Parks and Conservation Service (PCS) staff to protect and conserve several sites of early European settlement in the precinct.

2016 has been another successful year, with the following highlights. Several guided drive/walks of the Glenburn Precinct were conducted for the Heritage Festival and U3A. The activity for the descendants of John and Catherine Coppin saw around 40 people from as far as Melbourne and the upper NSW coast attending. They made a very generous donation towards the work of the Friends of Glenburn.

Despite a run of wet weather, several work parties were conducted, including one with staff and students from the Canberra Institute of Technology. Much was achieved. For example, another three interpretative signs have been erected in the precinct, bringing the total to 13. The text can be seen on the National Parks Association of the ACT website (www.npaact.org.net) under Friends of Glenburn.

Volunteers after erecting a support post at Glenburn Hayshed in May 2016. Left to right Matthew Higgins, Max Lawrence, Steve Hill and Brian Slee. Photo, Col McAlister



Other achievements included maintenance of the grounds of several of the historic sites i.e. mowing grass, painting timber fences with a 50:50 mix of linseed oil and mineral turps, digging out and cutting and dabbing re-emerging blackberries, pruning plum suckers, poisoning serrated tussock and covering the Colverwell graves with black plastic to retard lichen growth.

Major work has been carried out on the 13 kilometre Glenburn Heritage Trail for walkers and cyclists. The final route connecting most of the historic sites has been settled, two steel mesh bridges have been installed at creek crossings, four small gates have been installed in fences to improve access and more than 20 route markers have been erected. It is expected the trail will be completed early in 2017 after major work at the intersection of Charcoal Kiln Road and the Kings Highway is completed, including a new car park and upgraded crossing of Glen Burn Creek near River Road.

The group provided substantial comments on three drafts of the Conservation Management plan (CMP) that is being prepared on the precinct for ACT PCS by Philip Leeson Architects with the assistance of an ACT Heritage Grant to the National Parks Association of the ACT. The final CMP will establish a blueprint for work to be done in the precinct for years to come.

In conclusion, I would like to thank PCS staff and volunteers for the impressive work they do to protect and conserve the historic sites in the precinct for future generations. Well done everyone.

Col McAlister
Convenor - Friends of Glenburn
E: cvmac@grapevine.com.au

Some of the 41 descendants of John and Catherine Coppin who visited Coppin Homestead ruins in April 2016. Photo, Rhonda Boxall



Friends of Jerrabomberra Wetlands



Friends group after planting on levee bank beside Jerrabomberra Creek. Photo, Deb Kellock

Jerrabomberra Wetlands is a unique nature reserve. A fertile plain by a river when Indigenous people lived there, Europeans grazed hoofed animals, planted pastures, built bridges, changed waterways, dug trenches and dumped land fill. The area was so modified when it was declared a nature reserve 16 years ago that there was no fixed plan and anything was possible.

Wetlands attract local and migratory birds and birds attract bird-watchers, so paths and bird-hides came first. The challenging job of restoration and rehabilitation came later, and will take a long time; it needs ideas, science and volunteers and consultation.

I've been a volunteer with the Friends of Jerrabomberra Wetlands for over a year now and I'll tell you my story. I attend one of the twice weekly work parties because I live in an apartment with no garden, am solitary, like interesting conversation and enjoy getting my hands into the earth. This is what we do: following suggestions from ranger Michael Maconachie, fearless Deb (our convenor) takes us to a site or two to dig, weed, plant, cut, dab, wade, climb, water and slash. The ground can be hard and rocky, the soil water-logged or dry as dust.

It's been a wet year so the weeds have had a good time and it's hard to find plantings to water when they are camouflaged by weeds. Blackberries and thistles hurt! I was sad that many of the earlier plantings hadn't thrived and I wanted to shoot the foxes eating the turtle eggs, trap the rabbits eating the plants, burn the weeds and blackberries blocking the bird hides, dig out all the willows clogging the waterways and chop down all the dead trees. However, Michael and Deb are wise and just smiled before enlightening me. Jerrabomberra Wetlands is about working with what we have and

that means living with resident foxes because they are territorial and they might eat some rabbits. Some willow species are useful and dead trees are home for the wildlife. Landcare is long term. Plants take a while to grow; trees take a long time to mature; mature trees shade out weeds and all this takes 20 years, rather than one or two. Plantings of young Ribbon Gums with well-munched leaves are a success as it means the leaves have been food and homes for caterpillars, ants, spiders, beetles and birds. The Yellow Box

plantings have been successful, which makes up for the not-so-successful, but beautiful, native Poa grass. I've learned a lot and there's more.

Jerrabomberra Wetlands has played host to quarterly bird surveys, platypus surveys, night-time frog surveys, school holiday activities, art classes and various nature walks with experts. One 14-year old came with friends to celebrate a 'Landcare birthday party', joining a Saturday volunteer working party to attack the blackberries and check the bird boxes.

The Woodlands and Wetlands Trust have hosted evening lectures at Jerrabomberra Wetlands by experts on bats, hydro-geology, fish and Latham's snipe (the bird that travels 8,000 kilometres from Japan to spend summer in south-east Australia).

Structural improvements this year included the creation of new ponds for school groups to undertake water bug activities, upgrade of the track around Kellys swamp to make it wheelchair accessible and an Indigenous garden with fire-pit surrounded by local plants of significance to Aboriginal people from the Canberra region.

Over the years the Friends have helped change the former Jerrabomberra Wetlands into an improved environment of diversified species of flora and fauna and, as a result, a place where more and more of us want to spend our time. Won't you join us?

Author: Cathy Aikin

Deb Kellock

Convenor - Friends of Jerrabomberra Wetlands

E: friendsofjerrawetlands@gmail.com

W: www.jerrabomberrawetlands.org.au

Friends of Mulligans Flat

This has been quite a year, but things are starting to settle down again.

Firstly Kathy Eyles handed over the reins of the Friends of Mulligans Flat Convener so she could concentrate on her PhD. Kathy was instrumental in setting up this Friends group and her dedication and hard work will be sorely missed. Kathy is still active as a Friend and can also be spotted around Mt Taylor! A big thank you to Kathy for all her hard work and good luck with the study.

We faced a problem with the rain. Mulligans Flat lived up to its name – being flat, the run-off was quite slow and consequently the larger flat areas were constantly under a couple of inches of water. Water was also pouring out of seeps half way up the slopes. It has started to dry out a bit and the Sanctuary now looks lush and green, but with a few more weeds than usual sprouting forth.

Now down to this year's activities.

The Friends hold quarterly work parties to tackle larger jobs with the Park rangers. Our autumn work party (on the first Sunday in March) was held on Clean Up Australia Day, so we cleaned up the litter blown against the reserve fence. This year it was gratifying to see that the Parks and Conservation Service (PCS) truck was nowhere near as full as it has been in past years.

We tried three times to hold the winter work party in June and July but were rained out each time!

Even for the spring working party the planned activity of installing some erosion control measures could not be undertaken as the ground was still far too wet. So it was 'house-keeping' activities in the vicinity of the Woolshed, where we could keep our feet fairly dry.

Clean-up Australia Day 2016. Photo, Mark Smith



Inaugural monthly work party, keeping our feet dry!
Photo, Mark Smith

A trial of a monthly working party started in September, and was held on the second Wednesday. With the help of PCS staff, the first three work parties have been very successful.

Friends have been active in pest and wildlife monitoring projects in the Sanctuary including helping to feed the third batch of 11 Bush Stone-curlews housed in a special aviary to acclimatise ahead of their release into the Sanctuary in spring. Much to the delight of all was the sighting of young birds that hatched earlier this year and a recent sighting of two very young chicks from this season's breeding.

The Friends once again participated in the Climate Change Frogwatch project from May through till October. Gumboots were the order of the day after some of the really heavy rains saw most dams overflowing.

Last summer's Turtle Patrol project, designed to help turtles migrate between the dams in the Sanctuary and water bodies in North Gungahlin, was a huge success with some 250 turtles relocated from one side of the Sanctuary fence to the other. The Turtle Patrol for this season has already started and the large numbers of Friends ready to help means the fence can be patrolled twice on some days and we can also patrol the fence in the northern part of the Sanctuary where turtles have been observed. So far over 180 turtles have been relocated this season.

Our annual Science in the Sanctuary forum at Gungahlin Library in July this year kept the community up to date with the research underway at Mulligans Flat. Our guided bird walks in autumn and spring and a spring wildflower walk continue to be a success.

Warm thanks to our volunteer guides—John Brannan and Bill Graham on birds and Michael Doherty on plants

Mark Smith
Convener - Friends of Mulligans Flat
E: markandkay@apex.net.au

Friends of Mount Painter

2016 saw Friends of Mount Painter (FOMP) engaged, as always, with a great deal of weeding. We removed woody weeds from half the hill, worked to keep African Lovegrass off the reserve and intensively weeded our target areas of native vegetation. The Green Army's help in tackling Patersons Curse and St Johns Wort in areas we had not been able to reach thus far was much appreciated. But we are dismayed at finding many new blackberry plants; they have been mapped for spraying.

Our FOMP plan to replace Phalaris in the Wildflower Triangle with native grasses and forbs is on hold until a prescribed burn has been carried out. Meanwhile we are providing aftercare for 400 Drooping Sheoaks planted by the Parks and Conservation Service (PCS) and the Green Army for the threatened Glossy Black-cockatoo.

Removing pink guards and stakes from a 2011 planting has been a big task that took FOMP, the Green Army and a team from Conservation Volunteers Australia two and a half days. Roaming over steep slopes to collect guards and stakes gave everyone a very good workout! We will reuse some of the guards on the sheoaks, which need greater protection from kangaroo grazing than the current small guards provide.

One of the highlights this year has been engaging parts of the community not previously much involved with the reserve. In January we built on an earlier connection with Macquarie Primary School (MPS) through an evening visit to the summit with some of the teachers.

Snow on Mount Painter, July 2016. Photo, Cate Aitken



This has been followed by several visits by senior students as the opportunities that Mount Painter offers are incorporated into the school's program. This spring we guided MPS families and staff on a walk to the Aboriginal scar tree. It was good to introduce them to a part of the reserve that was new to them.

We also made contact with a group of Canberra Institute of Technology students studying environmental management. In a win-win situation, they practised their use of GPS in recording the location of surviving trees from a 2011 planting, and FOMP acquired information about the trees they have been monitoring that will enable recording to continue into the future. The students also wrote a report on their findings that included tree height, health and genus.

Briefly, some of our other activities have been:

- examining how a loop walk round the hill might be established by connecting existing vehicle tracks with a path up the gully running west from the water tanks. We have provided PCS staff North District with five options for a route for the path. With a loop suitable for both walkers and cyclists, we hope people will explore more widely
- looking at orchids with a FOMP member, identifying potential Pink-tailed Worm-lizard habitat with Dave Wong and watching birds with Nicki Taws
- proposing a bush tucker grove on a strip of unleased land beside Coulter Drive.

Sarah Hnatiuk
Convenor - Friends of Mount Painter
E: sarahhnatiuk@yahoo.com.au

Macquarie Primary School students learn about Drooping Sheoaks from Cate Aitken. Photo, Faith Bentley



Friends of the Pinnacle

The expanding Pinnacle

2016 has been a significant year for the Pinnacle and for the Friends of the Pinnacle. In mid-August, the almost 19.5 hectare area of leased land to the south of the reserve, which had been offset for the land cleared to make way for the new University of Canberra hospital, officially became part of the Pinnacle Nature Reserve.

This new area includes a small area of endangered Yellow Box-Red Gum Grassy Woodland, habitat for the vulnerable Pink-tailed Worm-lizard (*Aprasia parapulchella*), and areas of remnant and revegetating woodland that constitute an important connectivity link in the chain of reserves running from Black Mountain out along the Belconnen Hills to the Molonglo and Murrumbidgee corridors. It also contains a number of Aboriginal heritage sites of cultural and archaeological significance.

As with any offset, the new area will be managed under its own Offset Management Plan, to be implemented by the ACT Government's Parks and Conservation Service (PCS), with the collaboration and assistance of the Friends of the Pinnacle. Already, additional wildlife habitat has been provided through the introduction of coarse woody debris below some of the existing remnant gums and around the dam. Future improvements will include weed control and small-scale plantings of understory and complementary mid-story species. Because the offset is still part of a buffer zone for fire control, the fuel load has to be controlled using fuel-load reduction measures such as crash-grazing (grazing high numbers of stock over a small area for a short period of time). However, fencing within the extension will keep the stock out of the more sensitive areas where the understory is predominantly native grasses and wildflowers.

Hibbertia among the remnant Scribbly Gums. Photo, Margaret Kalms



Top: Meadow of Billy Buttons overlooking William Hovell Drive. Photo, Margaret Kalms

Bottom: Buff-rumped Thornbill at its nest. Photo, Alison Milton

In October this year, Fotpin collaborated with the ACT Field Naturalists to lead a guided walk through the offset to introduce members to the new area. The walk was very well attended and visitors were rewarded with some lovely areas of native wildflowers in bloom.

Our autumn and spring guided walks programs also included bird walks and a re-run of Warren's popular walk looking at how the reserve has changed over the years following extensive plantings early in the reserve's history and the systematic weed control work by Fotpin since 2009. The most recent bird walks included dropping in on some of the reserve's resident species on their nests.

A wet winter produced an outstanding season for orchids and other wildflowers, but it has also produced flourishing Patersons Curse and St Johns Wort amid enormous stands of head-high (and taller!) wild oat grass. The task ahead of us seems daunting at times, but things are clearly improving, which is the best possible testament to the ongoing efforts of all our volunteers and the excellent support provided by PCS staff.

John Brannan
Convenor - Friends of the Pinnacle
E: fotpin@fotpin.org.au

Friends of Tidbinbilla

With all of the rain this year, the reserve has looked amazing and the river has been flowing better than it has for years.

There has been a lot of change in staff, with John McRae winning the Alps Program Manager position and Jackson Grant-Taylor moving to Stromlo. We welcome Simon Stratford and Travis Blackburn who have moved into their roles.

The Friends of Tidbinbilla (FoT) began the year poisoning Knotweed near Rock Valley. This is an invasive species with very deep strong roots that can cause significant damage. We are lucky here as its spread appears to be contained by the geology of the site. The species needs to be poisoned over a number of years to actually kill it. Last season Conservation Volunteers Australia teams also spent a few days treating it. The wet cold weather this year seems to have slowed it down but we intend to focus some work parties on Knotweed again in the coming months.

We continued to focus on a large patch of blackberry along the Tidbinbilla River and have removed *Verbascum* at Rock Valley, Turkey Hill and the picnic areas. We also re-built leaky weirs near Rock Valley.

In April the group spent our now annual weekend at Nil Desperandum mulching weeding, pruning, birdwatching and generally having a great time.

Treating Knotweed (*Fallapoia sp.*) near Rock Valley. Photo, Fiona Spier



A few months ago, one of Tidbinbilla's Aboriginal guides, Kie took us on a walk up Hanging Rock, informed us about the cultural history of the area and about how Aboriginal people used the local plants. Afterwards, Kie and Travis took time to show us how to throw a boomerang and also how to throw a spear using a woomera. The spears were as hard as we imagined, but Kie and Travis made it look so easy. What a highlight for the year!

We have continued with monthly Waterwatch surveys and annual Frogwatch surveys and Martin from Waterwatch Southern ACT Catchment Group came out with us to help with our spring water bug snapshot.

Fiona Spier
Convenor - Friends of Tidbinbilla
E: fiona_spier@hotmail.com

Connor Stephenson with Indigenous ranger Travis Blackburn.
Photo, Fiona Spier



Friends of Weston Community Orchard

The Canberra Biodynamic Gardening Group and ACT for Bees, with the support of Fetherston Gardens, were given custodianship of the Weston Community Orchard, formerly the Weston CIT School of Horticulture Orchard, in March 2016 by the ACT Government.

The CIT orchard was abandoned after the 2003 Canberra bushfires when the campus was burnt and CIT moved to Bruce. It is conveniently situated above Orana Steiner School, with many of the volunteers for the Community Orchard having an association with Orana and Rudolf Steiner's regenerative biodynamic agriculture.

The orchard, originally planted as a training orchard for CIT students in the late 1980s and 1990s as a test area for a variety of fruit and nuts, has four to five apple and pear varieties, a good range of plums, nectarines, apricots, almonds and hazelnuts, persimmons, feijoa and quince, grapes, a mulberry tree and fig trees that have survived despite no watering system or landcare over the past 12 years. While blackberry and prunus overgrowth took over much of the orchard, it possibly helped to maintain the moisture and nooks for a variety of birds, pollinating animals and other wildlife.

There was great excitement at the first working bee as we discovered the treasures of the old orchard, hidden away for years in the overgrowth. The children made tunnels and hideaways in the prunus rootstock and helped to drag great loads of cuttings to the compost pile. Passersby commented that they hadn't realised there was an orchard there and were excited about the project.

We've been having monthly working bees on the 3rd Sunday of the month. Quite a few were rather wet, but volunteers were undeterred!

Busy for Bees' working bee in September was a fun event where Carmen and Jack guided the children in building a native bee hotel for the orchard. Helen gave a talk on bee-attracting plants for our gardens and we all enjoyed working together amidst the blossoming almond and plum trees. Warren brought along his 'Warre' Hive for his natural beekeeping talk, Julie read a story about the bees to the younger children and, of course, there was lots of food to share and enjoy together. Thanks to Philip Selmes who has been so supportive of the Weston Community Orchard project and who invited ACT for Bees to contribute to the Floriade Bush-Friendly Garden by building a native bee B&B for the display.

We are assessing the health of the trees as we clear the undergrowth and will be pruning, grafting and sourcing suitable heritage varieties where necessary to restore the orchard to its former glory. Future plans include planting the Unwin Street boundary with a range of 'bee friendly' shrubs for the native pollinators, running grafting and biodynamic gardening workshops and possibly having an open day in November 2017 as a part of the Open Gardens Scheme. Signage for each of the trees, a plan of the orchard and a beautiful notice board are also projects on our list.

We still have much work to do to physically clear the blackberry and welcome new friends to join us. Refer to our facebook site for monthly working bee updates.

**Authors Diane Poole and Julie Armstrong
Chris Boswell
Convenor - Friends of Weston
Community Orchard
E: ochriso@iprimus.com.au
Facebook: [Weston Community Orchard](#)**



Friends of Weston Community Orchard. Photo, Chris Boswell



Farrer Ridge ParkCare Group

It's been a busy year with many highlights.

In December 2015, Farrer Ridge ParkCare Group was helped by the Green Army to treat *Verbascum* at sites with bad infestations on Farrer Hill.

Wendy gave a presentation to Year 4 students at Farrer Primary School related to the curriculum outcome, 'Science as a human endeavour'. She talked about the science of nature reserves, discussing what grows where, how plants live and grow together in different places and how ecosystems and interactions influence how ParkCarers (working with ACT Parks staff) restore and conserve the natural values of a nature reserve. She also discussed how scientific developments have affected the environment and people's lives, for example, by measuring then modeling and predicting global warming outcomes (since the mid 1950s, the hottest years on record are 2014 and 2015).

In February, Jennie and Wendy met with Ian Rayner of Greening Australia to discuss using the Farrer Hill restoration site for placing clay seed balls. Seed balls are a mixture of clay and native seeds that can be easily distributed from a moving vehicle or by a walker. After rain, the clay crumbles and the seeds germinate. The group had a bag of approved grass seeds to use in the area. The group continued to remove *Verbascum* and other weeds throughout February.

To avoid the heat in March, working bees continued to start at 8:30am. Part of the restoration work included returning old logs to woodland sites, which then provide habitat for reptiles and other animals as well refuges for plants. Wendy and Jennie participated in the Callum Brae Nature Reserve guided bird and woodland walk and talked about woodland restoration.

Chocolate Lily. Photo, Wendy Rainbird



Flowering Kurrajong. Photo, Wendy Rainbird

In April, the group continued *Verbascum* removal. Wendy participated in the Fire in the Landscape forum, which was very useful. The Bushfire Operations Plan was discussed in detail, and how fire is used in the landscape and its ecological effects.

Our May and June work activities were cancelled due to the very wet weather but we did discuss the upcoming Canberra Nature Park Management Plan.

In July, we worked in an area that had been infested with numerous woody weeds, including Briar Rose, in our early days. It's great to report they are now rare in the area. Wendy went to a talk on fertility control for wildlife research and a forum on rabbit control in the ACT.

In August the Green Army helped with removing *Verbascum* seed heads and treating their rosettes. Seven CVA people helped us work through the south-east corner of Farrer Ridge Nature Reserve, removing woody weeds and inspecting the erosion control measures, which have been working very well through periods of abundant rain. About nine Green Army people made over 1000 clay seed balls and a week later we put them in the ground on the Farrer Hill restoration site.

Other initiatives of the group included starting a Facebook page — Farrerridgepc — and cultivating seeds of *Cullen tenex*.

Finally, I was honoured to receive the ACT Individual Landcare Award this year. Having worked on Farrer Ridge Nature Reserve since about 1991, and having been the ParkCare Coordinator for much of that time, it was a great honour to receive the Award.

Wendy Rainbird
Convenor - Farrer Ridge ParkCare Group
E: wpainbird@grapevine.com.au

Fetherston Gardens Friends



Above: Fetherston Gardens Friends Community at the launch of the Gallipoli Garden.

Below: Gallipoli Garden. Photo, Lesley Pattinson

The Friends received an ACT Participation Seniors Grant to share Fetherston Gardens with our community by volunteering in our local senior aged care centre, Mirinjani in Weston Creek. We've had a delightful time with a series of gardening projects and workshops. Spending time outdoors, connecting to other people while pottering in the garden or working on activities has proven beneficial for everyone. As we have enjoyed the experience of volunteering with our seniors we are looking at new grant opportunities for 2017 to connect our community to Fetherston Gardens.

The new Gallipoli Garden is settling into the landscape of Fetherston Gardens. When we were given a small but precious plant, the Gallipoli Oak *Quercus coccifera*, and a Lone Pine, we knew they would need to be treasured. The Friends' committee applied for funds through the Department of Veterans' Affairs ANZAC Centenary Local Grants Program to build a garden named The Gallipoli Garden. We saw this as an ideal way to create a garden space for the Gallipoli Oak and Lone Pine that would provide a garden space where people could meet, reflect, respond and be connected to loved ones and to our community.

The Friends researched the plants growing at Gallipoli at the time of the war—*Arbutus*, *Cistus*, Rosemary, *Pinus halepensis*, the Lone Pine, and *Quercus coccifera calliprinos*, the Gallipoli Oak.

The shrubby prickly oak grew on the hillsides, and was propagated from an acorn that returned home and was planted after the war. We decided to stay true to the landscape.

The garden project was a collaboration of funding. DVA provided for the connecting path with Fetherston Ridge and the

Gallipoli Garden space. The ACT Government and our volunteers worked over many months caring for the gardens and enabling the connections between all partners involved with the project. The garden was created by Terry Fox, of Foxies Landscapes. Terry was Tony Fetherston's first apprentice on site. His connection to this place fits alongside Tony Fetherston's and the garden is a lasting legacy to this.

The new Gallipoli Garden opened in the afternoon of Remembrance Day 2016 with the Defence Force Army Band and warm speeches from our partners and politicians. Janet Lawrence, Tony Fetherston's daughter, spoke graciously of her father and his legacy, both in the gardens and as a serving member. The Gallipoli Oak, given by Susan Parsons, was planted by Gai Brodtmann. The Lone Pine, given by Anna Howe, and the new plaque were rightly placed.

The Wee Jasper bluestone sitting wall and paved area are welcome places in the garden for conversation and reflection. As the Fetherston Gardens Friends have chosen to highlight these significant plants from the Gallipoli Peninsula 100 years on, the Gallipoli Garden enables our community to share in this place of reflection and connection.

We meet on the last Sunday and 2nd Wednesday of every month (except December and January) from 10 am to 1 pm. Entrance is located in Fetherston Place, off Heysen Street, Weston. Please check for updates and information from the Weston Creek Community Council or Fetherston Gardens Friends. Everyone is welcome .

Lesley Pattinson
Convenor - Fetherston Gardens Friends
E: fetherstongardens@gmail.com

Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group More trees for the Gudgenby Valley

The Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group (GRBG) continues to work hard on rehabilitation of the former pine plantation. Rabbits have been a continuing problem in the regeneration area and in localities nearby, resulting in an eradication program that included ripping burrows causing ugly scars on the landscape. Initial attempts at repairing included planting native grasses and also setting up experimental plots to determine which species of grasses, trees and shrubs might be the preferred option for planting in future eradication programs.

While we monitor results, the group decided to use already collected seed, plus some additional species known to grow in the area, to prepare some seedlings to plant in eroded areas. Last year in spring, we met at Greening Australia in Aranda to plant some tree, shrub and grass seeds in pots so that they could be planted out in the regeneration area the following year. Greening Australia kindly watered and cared for them over the summer months so that they were ready the following season.

We had planned to begin planting in early winter but with the wet weather it was impossible to use the fire trails in the Gudgenby area without doing some damage. Consequently the first plantings didn't take place till August. They were located at Peppermint Hill but due to the boggy tracks we had no option but to walk up to the planned site. Fortunately Ben O'Brien (PCS staff), ferried all the plants and tools up on his ATV even though it was his day off.

Thirteen volunteers planted about 130 trees that day, placing tree guards around everything except the grasses. However, the site was on a windy hillside and the wind proved a problem. A staple gun had to be used later to attach the tree guards to the stakes as many were blown away in a storm.

The remaining 100 or more trees were to be used on a closed fire trail above Frank and Jack's Hut. But again the weather defeated us and we had to postpone planting. We held an extra work party during the first week of the school holidays so we had some younger members to help out. The ground was very wet and soft which made digging holes much easier. After three hours we had completed the task.

We hope that most of these trees and shrubs will survive as they have had a good start with all the winter and spring rain. It is very satisfying to see Gudgenby taking on a more mature environmental profile as the work over the past 15 years or so is changing the landscape from a former pine forest to a native woodland and a home for wildlife. Our group may be small and we work in a very large area of 380 hectares but we are a very dedicated group and we love working with the PCS staff to help them out in managing Namadgi National Park.

**Author: Hazel Rath
Michael Goonrey
Convenor - Gudgenby Bush
Regeneration Group
E: mjgoonrey@grapevine.com.au**

Trees planted at Gudgenby. Photo, Jayda Rath



Isaacs Ridge Mount Mugga Mugga ParkCare Group

Our small group continues monthly activities on Isaacs Ridge and Mugga Mugga. We try to vary the locations for work though usually do the same thing—woody weeds and *Verbascum*. Over the years we have reduced the amount of *Pyracantha*, privet and hawthorn but we still have plenty of Briar Rose to tackle.

Occasionally we come across some new plants and this year we were lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time to see a patch of orchids, *Diuris chryseopsis*, we had not known about. We tried to time one of our activities to mass displays of Bulbine lilies *Bulbine bulbosa* in Mugga Mugga. This was much more satisfying than the mass display of Patersons Curse *Echium plantagineum* weed that we also have. The new offset area along Mugga Lane has several native plants that are not common in the rest of our area, making it a good addition.

We have been lucky to have the help of Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA). Their main contribution has been cutting and poisoning Briar Rose at the top of Isaacs Ridge, where it has been dense and tall. We tried using the cut branches to form protective rings so other plants could grow without being eaten by kangaroos, but the barriers were not high enough and the plants we used were mostly exotic weeds. We have found some uncommon native plants in the area as well. By the end of the year our helpful ParkCare Support Officer will have removed some of the big exotic trees that have been growing there for years.

CVA installed a number of small mesh enclosures to help native grasses and groundcovers grow and set seed without being eaten by kangaroos. We hope these spots will be the start of native regeneration and will have to weed them fairly often.

The Green Army put in some erosion control structures in a gully near the top of Isaacs Ridge, using local pine logs and wattle branches. One of the structures in the creek in Mugga Mugga was washed away in a 75 mm deluge of rain one night and has since been replaced. These structures use tightly tied bundles of Cootamundra Wattle in the bottom layer and two layers of pine logs all wired together and tied to stakes.

The section of the Centenary Trail through Mugga Mugga Nature Reserve has been changed. It now goes over the northern side of Mugga Mugga to avoid the roadworks and traffic on the quarry road at Mugga Lane. It is steeper and harder but gives views to Red Hill and the city.

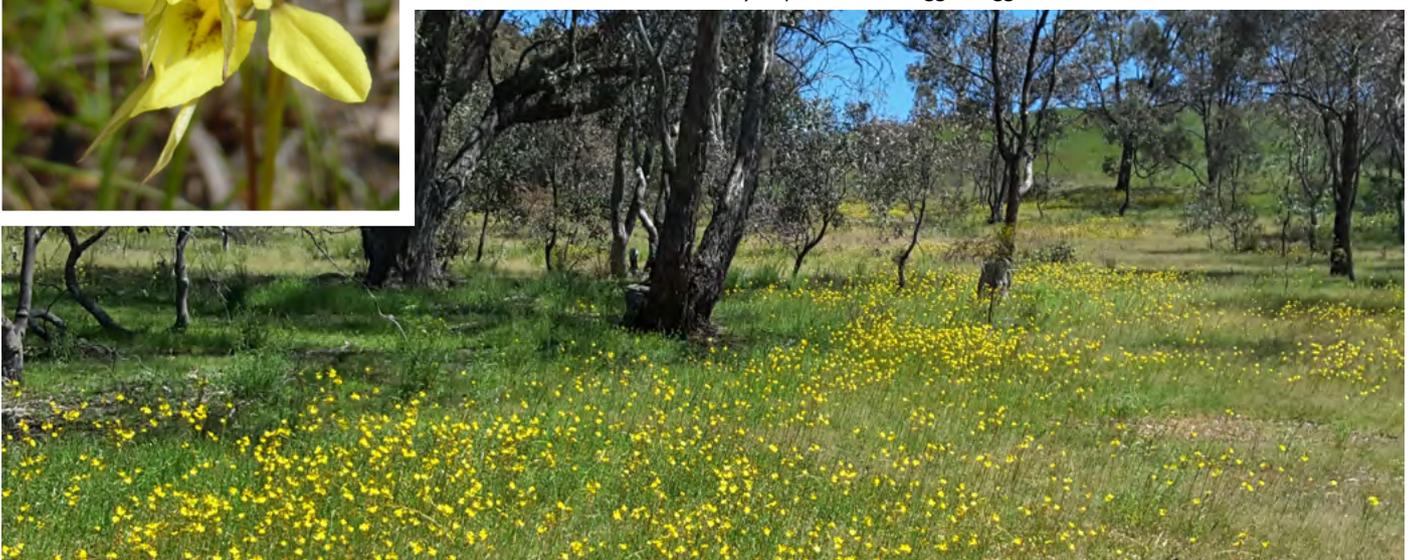
Contractors constructed several tracks in Isaacs Pines: two downhill mountain bike tracks were upgraded with road crossings that provide good sightlines to minimise conflict with other users; a 1.5 km shared walking and cycling trail part way up the ridge incorporating a rest stop with great views; and two new equestrian tracks at the south end of the ridge. Other informal tracks in the reserves and the pines have been mapped so they can be reviewed and closed if they are unsustainable.

Michael Sim
Convenor - Isaacs Ridge Mount Mugga Mugga ParkCare
E: mjsim@bigpond.net.au



Below: Bulbine Lilies at Mount Mugga Mugga

Left: Golden Moth Orchid *Diuris chryseopsis* Mount Mugga Mugga



European Heritage Conservation in Namadgi



(left to right) Tracy Morrow, Jean Hammond and Myles Gostelow replacing rotten stumps and bottoms of posts by scarfing dunning Orroral Woolshed restoration work, July 2016.

Photo, John Morrow



Starting a mortice the traditional way - Nick Gascoigne using a hand auger and Bob Salijevec using a brace and bit, during restoration work at the Orroral Woolshed on 9 July 2016. Photo, Simon Buckpitt

The Kosciuszko Huts Association (KHA) has been assisting the ACT Parks and Conservation Service (PCS) since 1991 to maintain homesteads, huts and associated structures within Namadgi National Park. Work spans from simple building maintenance to full scale restoration (i.e. rebuilds). Most work falls somewhere in the middle of these two extremes. Every hut in Namadgi has a KHA caretaker who is responsible for conducting formal annual inspections and organising work parties to maintain and restore the huts.

KHA work parties generally run for two to three days, although bigger jobs can go over a few weeks. There is a lot of preliminary work before each work party. A formal work party proposal detailing the work, methods, materials and tools is worked up with the local area ranger and submitted to PCS. Each work party proposal also includes a formal risk assessment. Appropriate building materials have to be procured and moved to the site in the days leading up to the work party. PCS move bulk water, gravel and timber to the site when it is required. If the hut doesn't have a toilet, a port-a-loo is hired. Where huts cannot be accessed by vehicle waste is carried out using the Cleanwaste® Toilet-in-a-bag system. This is so KHA does not contribute to the human waste problem that already exists around popular huts. We also try to limit the number of vehicles that travel to each site, although this can be difficult when there is a lot of equipment to be moved.

In addition to locals, people travel from Sydney, regional NSW (including Wagga, Cooma, Tumut and Moruya), and sometimes country Victoria to attend work parties. Attendees camp on site and self cater. Members supply their own tools, personal protective equipment, vehicles and trailers.

The most common jobs include:

- installing and fixing sub-surface and surface drainage
- installing and fixing roof sheeting and drainage
- scarfing posts and restumping
- replacing and repairing:
 - » structural timber such as bottom and top places, bearers, and joists
 - » non-structural timber such as architraves and fascias
 - » wall cladding such as slabs and weather boards
 - » internal wall linings
 - » doors and windows
- painting.

The most significant restoration effort over the last 12 months (1 November 2015 to 31 October 2016) was helping PCS restore the Orroral Woolshed after major storm damage. Significant repair work was undertaken at Lutons Crutching Shed (repairs to posts by stirruping) and Demanding Hut (restumping). Nine formal written inspections of huts were undertaken by caretakers.

A formal two day training course conducted for all existing and new hut caretakers covered the protocols and procedures necessary to ensure compliance with heritage requirements, National Construction Codes, Work Health and Safety and the NNP Plan of Management.

During the year, KHA volunteers dedicated 1,936 hours to Namadgi National Park.

Simon Buckpitt
Kosciuszko Huts Association
E: simon.buckpitt@inet.net.au

Minders About Simpsons Hill



2016 ANZAC Eve Ceremony on Simpsons Hill in Chisholm. Photo, Pat Boldra

In April 2015, Minders About Simpsons Hill (MASH) gained an ANZAC Centenary grant of \$5500 to upgrade the surroundings to the flagpole on Simpsons Hill in Chisholm.

The upgrade was due to the combined efforts of local community organisations including teachers and staff at Caroline Chisholm and Gilmore Schools, Minders Of Tuggeranong Homestead, the University of Canberra, the Returned and Services League, Tuggeranong Community Council and our Federal MP.

The schools were able to hold their annual ANZAC Eve ceremony on the newly upgraded area this year. School and community members also witnessed the unveiling of plaques incorporating designs by the school children on the theme of military medicine in World War 2 that were part of the upgrade.

The ANZAC commemorative plantings of rosemary, Gallipoli Rose and grevillea are doing really well following the winter rain. MASH volunteers look forward to planting out some of the wattles and eucalypts grown by students from Caroline Chisholm School in the autumn. In the meantime we persist with clearing woody weeds.

Pat Boldra
Convenor - Minders About Simpsons Hill
E: boldra@grapevine.net.au

Mount Ainslie Weeders

Much of 2016 was punctuated by wet weather. While our mid-week work parties were often cancelled because of rain, we were also able to take advantage of the continuously wet ground to do a lot of hand weeding (mainly Horehound and Indian Hedge Mustard).

Our activities included:

- extending the revegetation of the old Ainslie tip with planting around the edges at three sites
- spreading lots of woody debris around the tip. Thanks to Craig Wainwright for organising this
- planting on a small site off Cobby Street, Campbell
- continuing to remove Cootamundra Wattle from the nature reserve, with valuable assistance from Conservation Volunteers Australia and the Green Army
- a bird walk led by McComas Taylor
- a flower walk led by Michael Mulvaney
- Clean Up Australia day (behind the War Memorial)
- Vittadinia seed harvesting using a leaf blower
- mapping tracks by a very active member and recording flora and fauna on Canberra Nature Map.

Rabbit numbers are down but the kangaroo population remains too numerous for our liking.

Our youngest weeder hammers in a stake



Bearded dragon near the Ainslie Tip site.

In late winter, we were feeling proud of our efforts in the Vinca patch below the tip, where we had laboriously cleared Vinca major and then revegetated. It looked really lovely. However, at the time of writing, the area is covered in Fumitory and new Vinca shoots. A small creek has been draining down the mountain beneath the clay seal on the old tip to emerge into the original watercourse (now the Vinca patch). We have had a few planting casualties but the Bulbine Lilies have loved the wet conditions.

The weed season will be onerous this summer but this is balanced by glorious shows of wildflowers all over the reserve, such as a spectacularly large spread of Bulbine Lilies and Hoary Sunrays spreading almost as far as the eye can see—a sight to gladden the soul!

As always, thanks to our loyal and committed core group of Weeders and to the PCS staff for another memorable year of ParkCare.

Jeanette Ruxton
Convenor - Mount Ainslie Weeders
Email: mtainslieweeder@gmail.com

Conservation volunteers from CVA help to stabilise an embankment on the Vinca Patch



Mount Taylor ParkCare Group

This year has been dominated by weather, which has controlled our work on Mount Taylor; we have had floods, erosion, incredibly wet boggy areas and running streams that have erupted from dry gullies. The botanical growth on Mount Taylor has been amazing; weeds, grasses and shrubs/trees. The kangaroos have increased in numbers and robust health.

Our Green Army teams have been of great assistance with rabbit burrow identification, erosion control, woody and soft weed removal. Their cheerful presence is much appreciated. The work by our group and the Green Army on erosion control in different areas on Mount Taylor has been very successful.

We are placing information panels near our work to inform park visitors about what we are doing and to discourage unwanted negative attention. This approach is also very useful for information on track revegetation and stopping short cuts.

Our group was delighted to be awarded the Fairfax Media Landcare Community Group at the ACT Landcare Awards in 2015. Kathy Eyles went to Melbourne to represent our group as part of the National Landcare award ceremonies at 2016 National Landcare Conference.

The research and monitoring of the Small Purple Pea Swainsona recta area has concluded after four years. We know that protecting the vulnerable plants from kangaroos—both cropping and using the area as paths and rest/sand baths—has worked; building walls of cut woody weed branches around the area (and Blackthorn growth) has enabled 34 plants to produce flowers this year. Craig's hard work with his Marist student teams brought cut woody weeds to the area for the Green Army and our group to create the barriers.

The problems with the two wet seasons are evident in St Johns Wort and Verbascum growth, as well as woody weeds springing up as seedlings.

Droping Sheoak regrowth on the Richmond Track



We require more Government funding to control the weed population on Canberra's hills and open spaces.

We have had a couple of superb years for spring grass and wildflower shows, but the fire danger is now acute.

Visitors to Mount Taylor are increasing on weekends and work days. Many more cars are parked, mainly at the entrance opposite Mannheim Street, Kambah, but now spreading all along the Sulwood Drive park entrances. This has the potential for accidents when people and cars enter and leave the area.

Authors: Anne I'Ons and Kathy Eyles
Anne I'Ons
Convenor - Mount Taylor ParkCare Group
E: ajions@iimetro.com.au

Top: Erosion control along a management trail.

Bottom: History on a seat created from original rails that were burnt in the 2003 bushfires.



North Belconnen Landcare Group

How we care for grassland in the Ginninderra Catchment

The group comprises Junior Landcare, co-ordinated by Lenore Hodgkinson, and citizen science research co-ordinated by Dr Ken Hodgkinson.

Junior Landcare meets bi-weekly beside the Ginninderra Creek to restore patches of remnant native grassland. This activity connects young families and older adults with nature by weeding and planting back species gone from the grassland. No-one is too old or too young for this group. The group welcomes young families with pre-schoolers and school-age children as well as older adults from diverse cultural backgrounds and some with disabilities.

Facebook membership is now over 90 families. Those who cannot attend enjoy the Landcare posts and learn more about native plants, weeds and environmental issues. The group features a Landcare Band which plays for fetes and special occasions. The Landcare library box has regular borrowings. Craft objects made from the wild oats stems are a new feature of our Landcare activities. This skill was shared with our group by Yingxin Wang who learnt it as a child from his grandmother in China .

Ken Hodgkinson's group has a catchment-wide involvement. Thirteen sites in the Ginninderra Catchment were burnt this autumn by volunteers of the Gungahlin, Molonglo and Wallaroo Rural Fire Brigades and the 'Canberra Mow' treatment is mown by the ACT Government and CSIRO farm staff.

Grass sculptures made by members of the group after a weeding session at Evatt, November 2016. Stems of Wild Oats are crafted into sculptures. From left to right: Nancy Xu holding finished sculpture, April Yan behind Nancy, Ann Yan, Yingxin Wang, Meryn Kennedy, Lenore Hodgkinson. Photo, Alan Kennedy



Ewan Kennedy, a regular young Landcarer, is excited he can now lift up an 'adult' shovel. He has been planting Blue Devils (*Eryngium ovinum*) and removing weeds. Photo, Yingxin Wang, winter 2016.

Volunteers with plant knowledge are naming the plants in treatment plots. This citizen science project will provide the knowledge for restoring native grasslands, controlling weeds and reducing the chance of grassland carrying a wildfire. During the winter, Yam Daisy *Microseris lanceolata*, Billy Button *Craspedia variabilis*, Nodding Chocolate Lily *Dichopogon fimbriatus*, Bulbine Lily *Bulbine bulbosa* and Yellow Button *Chrysocephalum apiculatum* supplied by Greening Australia, were planted into each of the four treatment plots at the thirteen sites by teams of volunteers. This study will determine the best management for maximising the success of planting back species locally lost from Natural Temperate Grasslands. It is a long-term project of the Ginninderra Catchment Group and is supported by the ACT Government and CSIRO. It builds on a 10-year project at Croke Place, Evatt, where it was confirmed that regular autumn (but not spring) burning restores native plant species from the soil seed bank.

Lenore Hodgkinson
North Belconnen Landcare Group
E:hodgkinson12@bigpond.com

Karissa Preuss (co-ordinator of Ginninderra Catchment Group) and Ken Hodgkinson (fire ecologist) discuss the prescribed autumn burn at Croke Place, Evatt in May 2016. Photo, Yingxin Wang



ParkCarers of Southern Murrumbidgee



Paul, Deb, Kim and Vera in Strangers Paddock with the small erosion control structures in a high overland flow. Photo, Lauren Carter

ParkCarers of Southern Murrumbidgee (POSM) continued our focus on the area around Strangers Paddock dam over the last year.

The erosion control structures created with Cam Wilson in 2015 have lasted well and now have lots of vegetation growing amongst them. We have also built a few more small structures within the paddock as they are an effective way of stopping active erosion from becoming a bigger problem during wet periods.

One of the biggest tasks undertaken this year was to work on some of the overland flow problems. Over the years we had noticed that the water flowing out of the dam overflow pipe ran across the ground and caused extensive erosion on the walls of the long gully below the dam. Our aim was to divert the flow from the pipe directly into the gully. Darren Rosso and Paul designed a piping system and worked out the materials required. In May we had truckloads of rocks delivered to the area and we dug a long trench in which we placed an extended pipe. At the new outflow site we constructed two rock walls designed to take energy out of the flow and minimise the erosion potential. Thanks to everyone for their extra hard work that day including ranger Allan Mclean from Murrumbidgee River Corridor (MRC). We have also had rocks placed adjacent to the dam to create a new rocky spillway, to further divert water away from this sensitive area. This work is ongoing and will no doubt keep POSM busy next year.

2016 has seen the water levels in the dam fluctuating significantly. In April levels were so low that the large logs placed in the dam by rangers were high and dry.



New outflow pipe from Strangers Paddock dam with associated rock wall. Photo, Paul Room

Thankfully there was still enough water for us to water all the plants planted in the previous year by POSM and the Green Army. By September there was so much water in the dam that there was evidence of an overflow around the high edge of the new spillway.

The erosion control structure at the edge of the dam constructed in May 2015 hadn't been as successful as the others upslope as kangaroos use the area as a thoroughfare. In September we moved rocks to fill in the eroding sections and cut more branches to cover the bare areas. By October it was all under water!

We also collected rubbish around the Point Hut Crossing car park for Clean Up Australia day for the fourth year and although we still collected a lot, the usual party spots seemed to be less utilised than previous years! Thanks to MRC rangers, we were able to recycle material from 7 out of 13 bags collected.

Thanks to Deb and Paul and all the POSM members for all their hard work this year. It's so nice to go out every month with a cheerful group and enjoy our work and the morning teas! Thanks also to Darren and the MRC staff for their support, especially with requests for materials.

Lauren Carter
Convenor - ParkCarers of Southern Murrumbidgee
E: lauren.carter@iinet.net.au

Red Hill Regenerators Engagements with Conservation

ACT ParkCare groups have a great diversity of interests that wax and wane each year and sometimes there are some special gems and challenges. The Red Hill Regenerators are typical in this regard.

Most of our physical work focuses on conserving the native ecology and this year we made it a priority to 'control' the Cootamundra Wattles which, like rabbits, will probably never be eradicated, but we might be able to stop the exponential growth. As for Verbascum, for some reason, perhaps the wet weather or the effort we have put in, we have not seen a huge resurgence so far.

That's the routine stuff.

We've been fortunate to get lots of keen Cootamundra warriors including scouts, Green Army/Conservation Volunteers, ADFA cadets and the unique Craig Wainwright, who seems to be everywhere doing everything. And thanks also to our ranger Ellyse Sheridan who has been so helpful and communicative.

The gems have been wildflower walks with Michael Mulvaney, butterfly walks with the expert Suzi Bond, Michael Mulvaney's heritage walk and the involvement of the rangers. And of course all the volunteers who just keep turning up to do the hard yards.

During the past year we've been fortunate to have a number of keen photographers posting to our Flickr site www.flickr.com/photos/redhillregenerators/ including Roy McDowall, who we never actually see because he can't make it to our regular events but is a star photographer and is very happy to share his finds.

Another star contributor of photos to the Red Hill section of Canberra Nature Map is Michael Mulvaney, which we all think is wonderful.

<http://canberranaturemap.org/Community/Location/78>.

Tawny Frogmouth with chick. Photo, Roy McDowall



Kookaburra. Photo, Paul Ratcliff

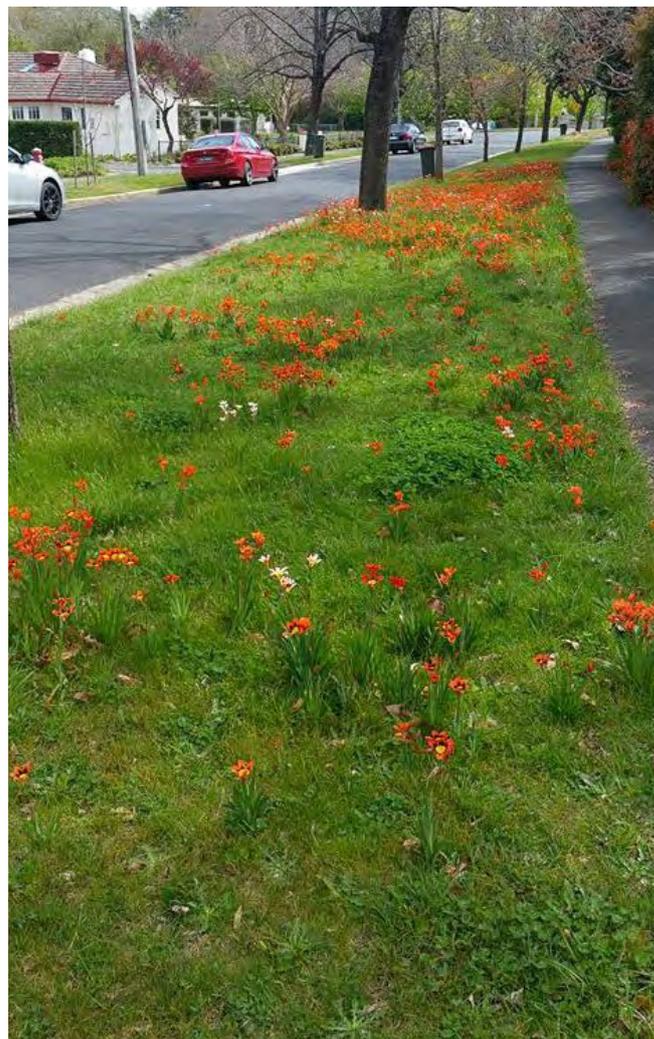
Red Hill and red flowering plants are somewhat synonymous—Canberra hills are perhaps the first Landcare bush-regeneration sites in the nation with Walter Burley Griffin keen to vegetate the denuded hilltops (see Scribbly Gum 2015). A theme of red flowering plants was chosen for Red Hill and Callistemon citrinus, Swainsonia galegifolia and Grevillea rosmarinifolia are still flowering a hundred years on from planting.

The Red Hill Regenerators monitor the numbers of Button Wrinklewort on Red Hill. This year's numbers are down by about 10% on last year, though this is probably within the level that could be attributed to counting error. The Button Wrinklewort started with a population of around 1500 which quickly doubled after initial weeding of habitat and has sat at around 5000 ever since except for the count in the middle of the drought years around 2007 when it went down to 3440.

The main challenge this year, and possibly next year, is the proposed residential development on the Federal Golf Club. The Red Hill Regenerators are concerned that there be no adverse impact on the surrounding endangered Blakely's Red Gum—Yellow Box Woodland. It is hard to see how we could achieve this with about 120 residential units. The developers have been prepared to engage with the Red Hill Regenerators and adapt their plans but it is early days yet and the outcome is unclear.

Sue Ross
Convenor - Red Hill Regenerators
E: info@redhillregenerators.org.au

Weeds at the early stage of invasion



At the recent 20th Australasian Weeds Conference http://caws.org.au/awc_index.php, an excellent presentation was given by Kate Blood from the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning. She described their early invader project, which looks at weeds in the early stages of invasion, specifically garden plants that are just starting to go bush.

The Victorian Government has shown there are massive economic and environmental benefits from halting the spread of weeds in their early stage of invasion. In the past, many weed species were allowed to become widespread before any serious control work occurred. Kate and her colleague Bec James have the challenging job of assessing the risk of emerging weeds and raising awareness about these garden escapes. This is a challenge in the ACT region too as there are many recently naturalised plants, and we need to assess which will become high risk weeds.

A review of the Garden Plants Going Bush brochure in the ACT made us realise that many of the plants listed were already widespread in the Canberra environment.

If we are to get the benefits of what the Victorians have outlined, we need to start educating the public about newly escaping garden plants, and other plants that have only just been recorded as naturalised in the ACT.

ACT Weeds Officers have used the ArcGIS On-line/Collector app weeds mapping data and reports on Canberra Nature Map to produce a list of higher risk weeds in the early stages of invasion. Below are photos and brief descriptions of some of these emerging invasive plants. Please report new sightings of these weeds in conservation areas on www.canberranaturemap.org. In the case of Hudson Pear, report all locations. ACT weeds officers will receive an email alert when there are reports on Canberra Nature Map. If you are in a ParkCare/Landcare group, or you are a weeds contractor, or a parks employee, please map treated and not treated areas of these weeds on ArcGIS-Online/Collector app.

Steve Taylor
PCS Senior Weeds Management Officer
Jenny Conolly
TCCS Pest and Weeds Officer

Urambi Hills ParkCare Group

A busy year for Urambi Hills. We held monthly work parties all year. Our biggest achievement has been our patience!

South Depot staff have been amazing—our ranger Liam has come out to several weekend parties. Our planning meeting set us up in good shape with a full year's worth of work parties laid out. This was important as it's been hard for us to know where to focus our energies.

So what did we achieve? We mapped rabbits, first using hand held GPS and then in Collector on our smart phones. Over the summer we nurtured our seedlings into their second year. They're still small but we think this is a combination of frost hollow and wet feet, so we'll see how they go over time. Also in January, we admired the insect-attracting logs delivered by the YBRG Restoration Project, along with a big Green Australia planting on the Bullen Range Nature Reserve side of the fence from our park. At that time, we enjoyed a fabulous display of Blue Devil *Eryngium ovinum* along the Meredith Circuit entrance creek.

We chipped *Verbascum* and, with Conservation Volunteers Australia and the Green Army, carried out some effective but modest briar and other woody weed culls. Recently, we've mapped blackberry and we're on the case to get the Hills documented so that woody weeds can finally get their comeuppance. However, patience was again required; we prefer a 'one out, one in' approach and we're still going slowly on plans to put any new plants in the ground.

The Hills are Pink-tailed Worm-lizard habitat and while some unauthorised rock turning in the early spring suggests they're very wide spread, we need a formal survey so we know what we're really dealing with.

We've learnt a lot this year with the help of some clever locals (thank you, Greg!) and we now know that the 1970s plantings on the east and north of the Hills were planted far too close together and must now be thinned so they can get close to the size they should be. We learnt that the grasses on the tops of the Hills are in quite good condition and we enjoyed very much wandering through the stand of indigofera midway up on a western facing slope. So far it's looking like the enriched former pasture that runs through the middle of the park is not going to grow waist high.

We have also been the recipients of a ParkCare information station, located down on the eastern Learmonth Drive entrance (thank you, PCS). Technically, we are Canberra Nature Map moderators but we're a bit stumped by this work. We've got some good experts to advise us but we lack someone to actually log on and take care of the sightings within Canberra Nature Map. If you know someone local who might be suitable, grateful if you can send them to us.

We usually get between four and ten at our work parties—and there are always muffins! We welcome visitors any time and quite often there are children at our work parties. We will have two sets of work going on at each work party in 2016—Collector mapping and physical labour. So if your teenager likes using their phone to find stuff, bring them along. We will continue the work party meeting pattern for next year (the last weekend of the month on alternate Saturdays and Sundays).

So, a huge thank you to everyone who has helped us. Every ParkCare group has to give a big shout out to Craig and we have to especially thank Liam and Kristy at South Depot (and Nick) and, as ever, Martine at South ACT Catchment Group.

Louise Curham
Convenor - Urambi Hills ParkCare Group
E: lcurham@yahoo.com.au

Top: Blue Devil (*Eryngium ovinum*)

Bottom: Learning about, Pink-tailed Worm-lizard *Aprasia parapulchella*



ACT Regional Landcare Facilitator Round Up

It's been another busy year for the ACT Regional Landcare Facilitator (RLF). This year the position has been job shared between Alison McLeod and Janelle Dennis and we are excited about the recent return of Sally McIntosh to the role.

The ACT RLF is tasked with supporting sustainable agriculture and Landcare in the ACT and this year we have worked with our partners to achieve some truly successful and exciting projects.

You're probably aware there is a network of coordinators and facilitators working in the ACT to help our amazing volunteers and achieve a better outcome for our local environment. In April the ACT RLF organised a training day for support staff to build on their facilitation skills and professional development. We believe that a strong and connected network of support staff will have flow-on effects to both the volunteer community and, ultimately, the environment we all strive to preserve.

In May, together with Greening Australia, we ran the 2016 Landcare for Singles event; 65 new volunteers came to a site at Bredbo to participate in 'speed planting' and get a taste of environmental volunteering and associated environmental and social benefits. This planting was also part of the National Landcare Programme's 20 Million Trees project.

In an effort to increase volunteer recruitment we partnered with our catchment groups, Greening Australia, Waterwatch and the Parks and Conservation Service to host 'Environmental Volunteering' stalls at both the ACT Volunteering Expo and the Connect and Participate Expo where we let the community know what opportunities are available for getting out there and getting involved!

The RLF also does plenty of work to help rural landholders be more sustainable. We sponsored local managers to attend a Sustainable Horsekeeping Conference, ran a 'Whole Farm Planning' workshop and a long-term 'BetterGrow BetterGraze' program and hosted a 'Grazing in El Nino' field day for local landholders. We also continue to partner with the Capital Region Small Farms Network and recently ran a joint 'Working with Weeds' field day.

Looking forward, we are hoping to continue to support sustainable agriculture and Landcare through supporting our networks, further training, an update to the Volunteering in the ACT brochure and (of course) getting ready for the next ACT Landcare Awards!

The ACT Regional Landcare Facilitator is hosted by ACT NRM in the Department of Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme.

Alison McLeod
ACT Regional Landcare Facilitator
E: alison.mcleod@act.gov.au



2016 National Landcare Conference



Participants at the 2016 National Landcare Conference.

‘Collaborative Communities—Landcare in Action’ was the theme at this year’s National Landcare Conference held in September at the Melbourne Convention Centre. The ACT was strongly represented at the conference and National Landcare Awards gala dinner.

The national advocate for soil, Major General the Honourable Michael Jeffrey AC, AO (Mil), CVO, MC (Retd), gave an inspirational opening presentation ‘Save the Soil, Save the Planet’; he spoke about the need for prioritising our natural strategic assets of soil, water and vegetation on a national level. He said we need our policies to reflect the importance of soils as a resource. Half our annual rainfall is lost to evaporation simply because it can’t infiltrate our soils. Conventional wisdom tells us to build more dams for water security, but Hon. Michael Jeffrey suggested we think outside the box and instead of building more dams, we invest instead in increasing our soil carbon to enable greater water infiltration. Did you know that 1 gram of soil organic carbon can retain up to 8 grams of water and the carbon content of Australian soils is currently only 1.5% where it has the potential to be up to 3-5%. There is certainly room for improvement in this space and it begins with education and innovation. The global population could exceed 10

billion people by 2050—the health of our soils should be the responsibility of the entire population, not just the land managers or farmers. His message was OUR soils are OUR responsibility, collectively.

It was inspirational to see the Landcare Awards finalists from all around Australia and to listen to the innovative projects being carried out all around the country by volunteers and coordinators who are so passionate about their work. Our ACT Landcare Award winners were well represented and respected amongst their peers as they told their stories of success to an audience. Though the ACT didn’t take home any National Landcare Awards this year, we can be proud that our ACT finalists did us proud. To find out more about the National Landcare Conference or Awards, take a look at the website at www.nationallandcareconference.org.au.

I can’t speak for all of the ACT delegates who attended the National Landcare Conference, but personally I came away feeling inspired, energised and optimistic about the future of Landcare and grateful to be a part of the exciting Landcare/ ParkCare community here in the ACT.

Alison McLeod
ACT Regional Landcare Facilitator