



The Scribbly Gum

Summer 2008-2009

Volunteers working in parks



(left) FoMM World Environment Day explaining Dragonfly, (middle) Hilltop to Back Fence Lecture having fun with ants, (right) FoMM World Environment Day walk.

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**Healthy Parks
Healthy People**

Welcome to Scribbly Gum

Samantha Ning, Community Programmes Officer

Welcome to the Spring 2008 addition of the Scribbly Gum Newsletter. Thanks once again to all volunteers for your continuing efforts in 2007-2008, and a big thank you to all the ranger staff who have supported the volunteers during their activities.

This report illustrates important achievements by volunteers working in parks within the ACT and surrounds. Activities such as weed control, planting, fencing off of sensitive areas, community education and monitoring has certainly made it a busy year for volunteers working in parks in and around the ACT.

The Scribbly Gum has traditionally been a ParkCare Newsletter, but a decision was made in April 2008 by ParkCare Groups and Parks, Conservation and Lands to expand the newsletter to incorporate all volunteers carrying out work in the wonderful parks in and around the ACT.

The reports contained in Scribbly Gum are written from the personal perspectives of the many volunteer groups and organisations involved in parks. As this is their report I have attempted to retain as much of the



Sam digging holes at the Lower Cotter Catchment planting day, September 3

original content as possible and exercise only a minimal amount of editorial control. The views expressed here are therefore those of park volunteers and organisations, not of the ACT Government.

As many of you know, I started as the Community Programs Officer with Parks, Conservation and Lands in April 2008. I have thoroughly enjoyed meeting many of the volunteer groups working in our parks and look forward to working with, and offering support to volunteers working in parks into the future. I can be contacted on:

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The Friends of Aranda Bushland Inc

Hanna Jaireth, Ian Falconer and Jenny Andrews (FoAB committee members)

The Friends of Aranda Bushland (FoAB) is one of the longest-established Parkcare/urban Landcare groups in Canberra. Our annual work program includes weeding, track maintenance, seed collecting, propagating, planting, policy work, administration and communications. FoAB is also committed to encouraging an appreciation of the diverse values of our natural environment in younger generations.

In 2008 so far, FoAB participated in two significant events with young people. Two FoABulous grandmothers (Mary Falconer and Jenny Andrews) participated in a ceremonial presentation of a Landcare Australia Wollemi Pine to Aranda Primary School in May 2008. Mary and Jenny also presented a copy of James Woodford's book, *Wollemi Pine*, to the school library. The young tree has been planted in the school's frog garden amongst bottlebrush and flax, protected from wind by the walls of the school.

In early July 2008, a party of 13 cadet officers from the Australian Defence Force Academy led by Rachel Chipman joined 7 members of the FoAB in clearing weeds from part of the rural



lease area of Glenloch Station. The area adjoins the heritage listed snow gums frost hollow, and has a high quality grassy woodland with interspersed hawthorn, briar rose, blackberry and honeysuckle. These woody weeds were cut and dabbed with glyphosate, an energetic activity which all enjoyed. The day was fine, if cold, and well suited to sawing down hawthorn trees. In the afternoon those cadets who were interested had a walk along the signed interpretive track into the Aranda bushland, with explanation of the flora and fauna.

For further information please visit our website or come to a work party on the second Sunday morning of the month.

Aim: to conserve and rehabilitate the bush

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Friends of Mount Majura

Report for January to July 2008

Waltraud Pix, FoMM coordinator

Friends of Mount Majura (FoMM)'s "Hilltop to Backfence" lecture series aim to increase public awareness of Mt Majura's environment and local conservation issues. There were six in the first half of 2008. Ajay Narendra spoke about the complex lives and navigation skills of ants and led a fascinated crowd along the mountain slope. Linda Rayor described the extraordinary family life of huntsmen spiders. Bill Handke's presentation on Indian Myna birds animated



local residents to take part in the control of this serious pest species. Don Fletcher outlined the latest research on the Eastern Grey Kangaroo which was an eye opener

on a contentious issue for many. Ian Fraser reminded a large audience at FoMM's World Environment Day celebration that our remnant woodlands require a lot of care. Dean Rouse entertained the audience with the outrageous strategies that orchids employ to trick insects into pollination. A program of the lectures and reports are available on www.majura.org.

Canberra's bird watchers were attracted to Mt Majura for a glimpse of one of Australia's most endangered parrot species, the exquisite green and red Swift Parrot.



Small numbers were first recorded this year in March and until the beginning of May flocks of up to 30 parrots have been observed weaving through the canopy of tall woodland eucalypts around the Hackett reservoir. Back in 2005 a record number of up to 70 swift parrots visited the same area for about six weeks to feed on eucalypt nectar and lerp. This year's return and long stay affirms the importance of Mount Majura reserve for the survival of this endangered parrot. In a talk arranged by FoMM the National Swift Parrot Recovery Coordinator Belinda Crooke showed a documentary with footage of swift parrots recorded on Mt Majura.

FoMM successfully lobbied the ACT Government to budget for the repair of the popular Casuarina walking track and for the control of an exploding rabbit population on Mt Majura and Mt Ainslie. We lodged submissions in regard to a proposed change of land use and associated dense residential development at the northwest corner of Mt Majura, which we believe will have a detrimental impact on the conservation values of the Nature Park. We are currently working to reverse a Government

decision that changed the land use of an area with high habitat value from 'nature reserve' into 'special purpose reserve' for horse grazing. The change took effect in 2002 based on advice that the area contains limited tree habitat and pasture suitable for grazing. Both statements are obviously and clearly incorrect. We think the 2002 change of land use was a mistake.

ACTEW officer Stephen Mudford walked with FoMM members along the power line easement to inspect the impact of past maintenance work and to discuss how it can be carried out in a more environmentally sound way. We pointed out that previous broad acre treatment not only resulted in serious damage of ground cover, weed growth and erosion but was also not efficient in terms of cost and target plant treatment. We look forward to solving this ongoing problem.



FoMM working Bee erosion control, May 18

There were six working bees for erosion control, planting of native trees, shrubs and ground cover and removing weeds at different sites on the mountain and group members continued working in their own time on various projects. For the first time since we started work at a 5 ha sheep camp on the Mt Majura ridge in 2004 more native plants than weeds have germinated. Directed seeded grasses however have little chance to establish under the current grazing pressure whereas forbs such as New Holland Daisies grow and seed well. Work to control erosion at the lower Majura dam continued and a large previously badly compacted and eroded area uphill of the dam is now covered with coir erosion matting. We loosened the soil, spread seeds of native grasses and daisies and placed the matting on

top. We found that loosening the compacted ground is crucial for the seeds to germinate and young plants to establish.

We owe a great deal to our PCL rangers, who are always supportive, to the Molonglo Catchment Group coordinator Zoe Wood, to our hardworking community program officer Samantha Ning. Many thanks!

Website: www.majura.org

Friends of Mount Painter Report on activities, December 2007 – July 2008

Sarah Hnatiuk

Over the last six months, Friends of Mount Painter (FOMP) have undertaken a variety of tasks in their monthly work parties and as individual projects. We have planted, placed wire mesh guards around larger seedlings, weeded, monitored the progress of recent plantings, and worked to control erosion on the steep south-western slopes. In April we joined a planting day organised by Friends of Aranda Bushland, repaying their help with one of our work parties in 2007.

Our weeding has concentrated on rooting out thistles, horehound, and verbascum. Vernon Bailey has spent many hours spraying African love grass on the road verges around Mt Painter to reduce the likelihood of its establishing on the hill. He has also led the spraying of scattered patches of St John's wort on the hill where the contractor was not able



FoMM autumn planting drainline April 20



ADFA cadets at work

to go. More recently we have targeted woody weeds, and have been helped enormously in this by 10 cadets from the Australian Defence Force Academy who spent a day of community service on Mt Painter.

Under Vernon's supervision, we have continued to lay out branches and brush wood along the contours on the hillside facing William Hovell Drive, as part of our erosion control work. Volunteers, with the help of the ADFA cadets, have now laid out 400m of logs and brushwood, and we are grateful to Parks, Conservation and Lands for undertaking to provide us with more wood, as well as some rocks. Forty peppermint seedlings grown by Vernon Bailey from seed collected from trees on Mt Painter have been planted between the rows of logs.

Over the past three years we have experimented with watering regimes for seedlings over their first summer. We did no watering over the following summer of what we planted in 2005, and 29% survived the hot temperatures. Watering throughout the summer of 2006-07 produced 60% survival. Last summer we once again watered the seedlings planted the previous winter, and 55% of the 301 planted are still alive. So watering definitely improves survival but is hard work for volunteers. We are still weighing up the costs versus benefits of this exercise. With the cool summer this year, we were certainly relieved that we needed to do very little watering.

With high kangaroo numbers on Mt Painter, we also need to help some of the young plants along by protecting them with chicken mesh

guards once they outgrow their small plastic guards. The kangaroos nibble at most acacias and indigoferas, but eucalypts, dodoneas and cassinias are left alone. We are intrigued that the planted Silver wattle seedlings appear very attractive to kangaroos while naturally regenerating ones are untouched.

The active members of FOMP are a relatively small group, usually between five and ten at work parties, so we are pleased that a number of new people have joined us recently. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the staff of Parks, Conservation and Lands for their support, and thank all those who attend our monthly work parties and the people who do additional work at other times for their efforts.



Erosion, Stromlo gully

Coolleman Ridge ParkCare Group

By Arminel Ryan

Winter is still with us, but Coolleman Ridge is looking wonderful. An abundance of native grasses clothe the slopes like a rippling silver-blond sea. kangaroo grass *Themeda triandra* also thrived last season, its red-brown clumps visible in many patches, so we expect it to have seeded well.

Our onslaught on the exotic weeds during the drought, when many have been weakened, seems to be paying off. Add to that a relative absence of macropods grazing – our local eastern grey kangaroo population has not yet quite recovered from the 2003 fire – and the result has been a bumper native grass crop.



Red-browed finch, Cooleman Ridge

We're observing a lot of rabbit activity, so they too are recovering! No doubt the foxes will enjoy a tasty young bunny as a change from devouring rose-hips! Many seed-filled fox scats are to be seen along the tracks.

Since the last Scribbly Gum came out in April, our usual activities of weeding and monitoring have continued. There have been good attendances at monthly Sunday meetings and a reliable team toils at our regular Friday sessions at the fenced regeneration area at Kathner Street. On two occasions, with the assistance of Conservation Volunteers Australia, we attacked weed infestations in the vicinity of Kathner Street and at the Chapman Primary School guided walk site. We've physically removed a good deal of St John's wort *Hypericum perforatum* and educated members about its toxicity.

Both guided walks are well used, with our volunteers ensuring that pamphlets are available to the public.

In addition, we've been able to make progress with our documentation of the vegetation of the Ridge. Our Vascular Plant List increases with each excursion, and now stands at more than 370. (That's more than the entire flora of some European countries, we're told!) About 200 of these are native to the area. Our herbarium has also expanded as a result of these rambles. Long-term member Pauline Lynga spends many hours on this work and deserves a medal. Dr Brendan Lepschi, curator of the Australian National Herbarium, has been most helpful to us on the vexed question of plant nomenclature, and very encouraging to us in our botanical efforts.

The average age of our Group has suddenly

dropped because our latest recruit is a student at Orana School. Tobias Hayashi, a keen photographer and knowledgeable birdwatcher, has begun to contribute articles to our newsletter. He has also undertaken to conduct an early morning walk on the Ridge for us in the spring. We have been displaying some of his photos at the Kathner Street information board and on our website

www.coolemanridge.org/fauna.html



Weebill, Mt Arawang, 03.07.08

Isaacs Ridge/Mt Mugga Mugga Nature Reserve

Ted Fleming

This large and unique Nature Reserve extends along Hindmarsh Drive from Mugga Lane to East O'Malley Estate, then south behind the suburbs of O'Malley and Isaacs to Long Gully Road. Its northern section is well forested with grey box *Eucalyptus microcarpa* and white box *Eucalyptus albens* and includes several enchanting rocky knolls and some intimate scrubby (bursaria) valleys.

It is an avian safe house as urbanization threatens and alienates habitat. Its high point is Mt Mugga Mugga (812m – the same as Black Mountain), and from the summit there are extensive views over the city and surrounding countryside. A few old farm tracks allow easy walking and a very light understory permits more adventurous, but safe, quiet and enjoyable bushwalking – with neither the sounds nor sight of the suburbs ever far away. Whilst invasion of briar, pyracantha and cotoneaster has been largely cleaned out, feral grasses such as St John's wort, Patterson's curse, thistle and serrated tussock present a huge ongoing problem. The area has also been the destination

of an enormous amount of waste of every conceivable nature generated by the now defunct Mt Mugg Mugga quarry, the construction activity in the East O'Malley Estate and rubbish dumpers. It is hoped that a volunteer management group will eventually be recruited from the palatial residences which have displaced the lovely old East O'Malley box forest.

Tracks along the southern section (Isaacs Ridge) present unrivalled recreational walks and immense views across the urban development's of Woden & Tuggeranong, ranging far to the west to the blue, undulating horizon of the Brindabellas. The actual ridgeline remains in a state of significant neglect, being home to just about every exotic capable of surviving the Canberra climate. Foot access for volunteer management is not a reasonable possibility as a climb of about 150 m is required – regrettable, as the ridgeline, which offers such huge views, is also obviously an origin of the feral vegetation which continues to threaten the cleared parts of the Nature Reserve. Pine wildings, the progeny of the forest harvested in 2002, also detract, and aggressive Reserve management is urgently required.

Kangaroos and black wallabies abound, the occasional echidna is seen and rarely lizards of various types and sizes are encountered. Unfortunately the Reserve is home to an increasing number of rabbits, and foxes are by no means uncommon.

Mt Taylor ParkCare Group

Anne l'Ons, July 2008

Climate change effect is showing on the vegetation of Mt Taylor. We find that seasonal changes are now inconsistent and we cannot rely on past history or our 19 year old diaries. We have found that many orchids and spring flowers are either reduced in numbers or flowering poorly. Some shrubs flower very early, much later in summer, or not at all. Poor spring rains were also consistent with poor flowering, or with grasses, showing much later in summer. Whilst observing the vegetation, we are also aware of the ever-increasing numbers

of kangaroos, which are creating many tracks, erosion, and over grazing problems. There are also changes in the bird populations and early nesting times, often about two months in advance of the old records.

Having assessed the changes, we continue our work programs, which cover counting the increasing kangaroo population, recording nesting trees and the bird species found, exotic (especially Indian myna infestations) as well as native species. Many large birds like ravens and currawongs, have become very dominant: long term residents like the kookaburras are virtually non-resident, probably due to attacks. The regrowth of acacia and young eucalypt copses have worked well at protecting many smaller birds, such as wrens and the double barred finches.

Our group has worked systematically over the last year, continuing to remove woody weeds and reduce the huge infestations of soft weeds. The control spraying of St John's wort, though very successful in 2006, was limited by a government budget and much of the infested areas have rebounded: this has meant spreading into new areas on the mountain. Assistance with the Australian Conservation Volunteers was much appreciated in controlling walking path erosion. We continue our botanical walks in spring and summer to appreciate the flowers. The old Richmond track on the north side has been realigned and will take the increasing numbers of walkers away from the eroded track. We are very pleased with all the work that has been achieved over 19 consistent years of ParkCare, but the future is very unknown. The support from our many group members throughout the years has been fantastic: the mountain is our showcase!

Website: www.taylorparkcare.50webs.com

Oakey Hill ParkCare Group

John Butcher

The Oakey Hill Parkcare group was formed in December 2003 following the January 2003 bushfires. The bushfires burned about 80% of the Oakey Hill Reserve and in September 2003, the ACT Government



began an ambitious fuel reduction program to remove blue gums, which are not endemic to the ACT. This galvanised local residents who, together with Environment ACT rangers, explored options for ongoing practical conservation work on Oakey Hill utilising volunteer inputs from the local community. The Oakey Hill Parkcare group had its first activity in December 2003 and is now in its fifth season. Initially, the group worked according to a plan developed by ACT rangers targeting areas of high conservation value on the Hill. Over time, as the Hill has recovered from the fires, the group itself has determined its work program in consultation with the rangers. In the main, the group undertakes weed control activities, focussing on pest species such as Cootamundra wattle, Tasmanian blue gums, briar rose and assorted woody weeds. Although the group has undertaken some planting of wildflowers, grasses and trees, the continuing drought has prevented any significant planting in the last two years. Occasionally, the group has undertaken the repair and maintenance of formal and informal walking tracks, again, weather and materials permitting. Our principal focus is on helping the Hill to heal itself by reducing the competition of introduced and exotic species, thereby allowing endemic species to flourish. Indeed, since the bushfires, many fire-adapted species which had been in decline have come back in a big way on Oakey

Hill, such as casuarina and cypress. Native grasses and a wide variety of shrubs have also made a comeback and are now competing strongly with introduced species. There is a lot of work to do yet, however, both clearing weeds and maintaining areas we have previously cleared. The number of active members has fluctuated over the years. As one might expect, people come and go. Some come irregularly but keep in touch with what the group is doing and a committed hard core turn out to most events. Usually, an event will attract from six to eight volunteers, mostly working in pairs. We run our outings on Sunday mornings from 9am -12pm, one Sunday each month according to a schedule worked out at the beginning of the year with the ranger supporting our group. We usually have our first activity in March (after the worst of the hot weather) and generally wind up in December with a morning tea on the Hill to give ourselves a pat on the back! Our group is unincorporated, we have no elected officers, and operate informally but effectively. We've achieved quite a lot in our relatively short time on Oakey Hill. We enjoy each others company, we feel good about what we're doing, we have a laugh, get some fresh air and exercise and tuck into freshly baked muffins at morning tea. How good is that? We're also very welcoming to new parkcarers! If you want to learn more or come and give it a try, simply contact the coordinator, John Butcher,

*Email: john.butcher@netspeed.com.au or
Ph: 6281 4941*



ParkCarers of Southern Murrumbidgee (POSM)

By Lauren Carter, Coordinator

It has been quite some time since news from our group has reached the Scribbly Gum Newsletter. Our long-term Coordinator Richard Strudwick has taken some time out from POSM and we would all like to thank him for doing such a great job. As the group has been active for over 10 years in the Murrumbidgee River Corridor (between Point Hut and Pine Island) the results of all the hard work are quite noticeable in places. I took on the role of Coordinator early this year and despite the small size of our group we hope to continue making progress in the area.

In August 2007 we had a visit from Peter Andrews, the Natural Sequence Farming advocate in conjunction with the Upper Murrumbidgee Chapter of the Natural Sequence Association. Peter showed us different ways of reading the landscape and discussed how to restore the hydrology



July 2007 (above), Feb 2008 (below)



of the area. The focus was on an actively eroding ephemeral creek called Barneys Gully, which feeds into the Murrumbidgee. As a result our direction has changed a little, from primarily spraying and planting to more active rehabilitation of the gully. Because of the frequency of fire in the area, we decided to prune lower branches off our established trees, which had two benefits. Firstly we hope it will protect the trees when the next burn occurs and second, we dumped the prunings into scoured-out headwall cuts along the gully to act as silt and seed traps. We also hope this method will help build up soil carbon in the denuded areas. The photos illustrate the change between July 07 and Feb 08, of course it helped that there was significant rainfall over summer!

Recent work saw members wielding mattocks to re-grade an eroding face which threatened to undercut established trees. Photos below show the original eroding face and the area after re-grading and planting with *Acacia rubida*. Another plan for this site is to create a wetland



March 2008 (above) June 2008 (below)



area by gradually building up the height of the creek bed using logs and transplanting more reeds into the pond.

Finally, we are in the early stages of fostering a relationship with Gilmore Primary School as part of their Sustainable Schools Program. Students will learn to propagate seeds, raise seedlings and then have planting days in our area. Where possible we shall provide them with locally collected seed, particularly for understory species as we need to fill the gap in habitat for birds in our area. Thanks also to Ranger Michael Maconachie for all his help in the field. We would love new members so please contact Lauren Carter on:

Ph: 0409 279 879

email: lauren.carter@iinet.net.au

Friends of Tuggeranong Hill and Conder Wetlands

Cath and Peter Blunt



The Tuggeranong Hill and Conder Wetlands Parkcare Group got off to a flying start on March 1 this year with a launch attended by about 40 people and has been going strongly on a monthly basis ever since. (Jenny Hadfield sharing her experiences of Parkcare at the launch)

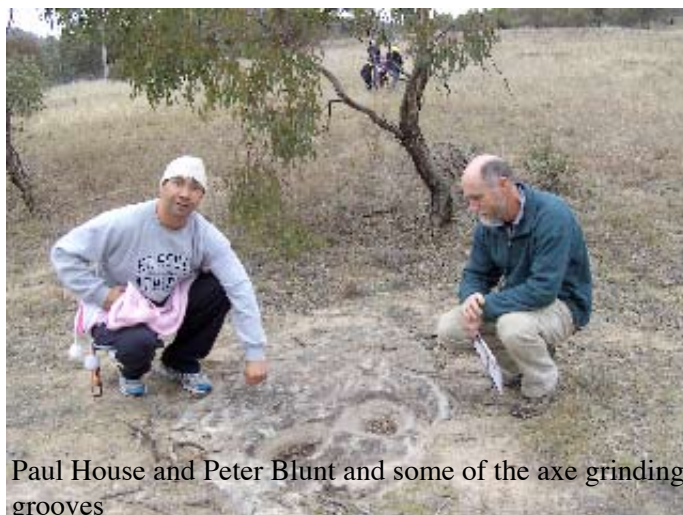
During March – May we attacked the sweet briar rose and verbascum which were encroaching on three areas of remnant vegetation on the Hill. The three gullies were identified by Ranger Bruce Higham as the areas which could most benefit from our efforts and at the end of the sessions we all felt we had made major inroads into keeping these areas clean.

A Ranger guided walk was held in June again attended by a large group of people.

Our last activity in July was held at of the axe grinding grooves in Theodore, where Samantha arranged for Paul House, from the Ngambri people, to provide us with a cultural interpretation of the significance of the site to Aboriginal people. We all felt very privileged to hear Paul's history of Indigenous occupation of the area and to have such an important site in our own backyard. We are hoping that the group can continue to have a connection with Paul and his family.



Attacking Sweet Briar



Paul House and Peter Blunt and some of the axe grinding grooves

Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group celebrates 10th Anniversary

Hazel Rath, Secretary GBRG

On July 12th, current and former members, friends and Park Rangers celebrated ten years of working in the former Boboyon Pine Forest in the Gudgenby valley. A morning tea was held on the same site where ten years before the project was officially launched by MLA Brendan Smyth.

In 1998, the task of removing 380 hectares of pine forest and revegetating with native species seemed a very daunting challenge. But the newly formed Group had a vision which, in spite of drought years, fire threats and dwindling numbers of volunteers to complete the task, has been almost fulfilled. All areas of the former plantation have been sown with local species of Acacias and Eucalypts although some parts have seen more successful growth than others.

The Forestry Hut, just inside the gate from the Yankee Hat carpark was the venue for morning tea. Eighteen people attended including former ranger Steve Welch and current ranger assisting the group, Dave Whitfield. During the years the Group has been very ably assisted by many of the Park staff who have given their time willingly to provide 'manpower', instructions, help with planning tasks and bringing out the trailer on workparty days. Volunteer numbers at the workparties have varied over the years with some former members moving on to other projects and pastimes, while new recruits have helped keep the project moving. However, we still have some original members who have continued to give their time over the past ten years. Some former members made the trip out for morning tea and were surprised to see what had been accomplished.

Clive Hurlstone, president, made a speech acknowledging all the hard work volunteers had provided over the years and invited everyone to walk to Hospital Creek where the first plantings took place to view the

extensive growth of native vegetation that has occurred. A few *Banksia marginata* were planted on a ridge overlooking Hospital Creek to commemorate the occasion. In addition, a notice board explaining the Groups' activities and involvement in the rehabilitation of the plantation was erected near the bushwalking register and another at Eleanor Grove where *Eucalyptus stellulata* have been planted in memory of Eleanor Stoddard who did so much in the early years to get the pine forest removed.

The Group would like to pay tribute to original member Frank Clements who sadly died on the weekend of our celebration. He had been a regular attendee and has contributed in many ways to the success of the project.



Friends of Tidbinbilla June 2008

Fiona Spier

So far, 2008 has been a big year for Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve (TNR), but same as always for the Friends of Tidbinbilla (FOT). The Sanctuary at the wetlands was officially opened in April, and so far it appears to be a big hit with visitors and volunteer guides alike.

The Friends have continued with our monthly Waterwatch testing, while a small band of keen birdwatchers get out and do their sites when possible.



Rock Valley work party

In February Rod Hillman, General Manager of TNR, was nice enough to lead a guided walk through the then not quite finished wetlands for Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) volunteer guides and the Friends.

For our workparty in March we spent a pleasant morning at the heritage listed Rock Valley Homestead cleaning up the garden a little and pruning some fruit trees, while April saw us doing vegetation assessments at four habitat monitoring sites staff have set up in the Koala Enclosure. Our workparty in May turned out to be a bad day for weeding so those that turned up spent a cosy morning in the Friends Room/ Ranger Conference Room over a coffee and some Themeda seed needing a clean.

FOT also participated in Clean up Australia Day in March, cleaning along Tidbinbilla Road, and had a display up at the Tidbinbilla Extravaganza in April.



Gary and Connor – Habitat Monitoring (above) Sanctuary walk (below)



Guided walk through The Sanctuary

Parks for Life – Celebrating the value of parks

Jane Easthope, Manager, Visitor Programs and Marketing

For the first time in history, the majority of the world's population now lives in cities. Urban parks and green spaces of all kinds are now the primary contact point for people everywhere to come together with nature, and to use nature to help meet the most urgent challenges of our time.

Yet most city green spaces are still grossly under-funded, under-supported, and disconnected from the very communities that need them most.

Investment in parks and green spaces has proven to have sweeping benefits for communities, including public health and fitness improvements and obesity reduction, strengthened child development and expeditionary learning, expanded crime reduction, job creation, green infrastructure advancement, leveraged expansion of surrounding housing and businesses, new civic pride and community engagement and community-based efforts to counter the climate crisis.

On the eve of the world's equinox on **September 20, 2008**, the inaugural **World Parks Day**, people all over the world are being asked to join hands in showing their support for urban parks

and green spaces, and to share photos, videos, and stories from a single day around the globe, documenting **Parks for Life**: the simple, powerful ways that investing in parks can make help the lives of billions of people.

The ACT is fortunate given that geographically, 72% of the Territory is parkland and open space which is possibly the most accessible parks and open space system in any Australian city.

Over 54% of this is forest and open woodland, all of which silently work as the community's green lungs and water purifiers.

Each year Parks, Conservation and Lands (PCL) survey Canberrans so that PCL can appreciate what they are doing well and identify where more effort is required. In 2008, Canberra people visited city parks 12.2 million times with 2.2 million visits to parks beyond the city. 88% of Canberrans are using parks to socialise and relax and when they get out there, 98% are very satisfied with their experience.

This is closely followed by 87% of Canberrans who use parks for going for a run, walk, riding a bike etc stating they are 95% satisfied with the experience. A lower, yet expected number of Canberrans at 55% visit parks to learn more about the environment with another very high satisfaction level at 98%.

Canberrans love their parks with 42% volunteering or planning to volunteer in ACT parks.

In addition to World Parks Day, the value of parks and the role they play in the Canberra community will be celebrated in **Parks Week**.

ACT **Parks Week** commences at Floriade on Saturday October 11 and concludes with a party in Telopea Park on Sunday October 19. **Parks Week** coincides with Down Syndrome Awareness Week, Haemophilia Awareness Week, Sock It To Suicide Week and National Ride 2 Work Day!

The Value of Parks document provides greater insight into the economic, cultural, environmental and emotional value of parks. This can be found on the TAMS website: www.tams.act.gov.au

Have your say – My Cotter, My Place

The Cotter Dam Enlargement provides opportunities for reinstating and improving the recreation areas below the wall. Have your say on what experiences, facilities and services are currently valued at the Cotter and what could be possible during construction and in the future. An online survey is found at www.actew.com.au/WaterSecurity/MajorProjects/your_say.aspx

and there will be a number of focus groups. If you would like to be a part of the focus groups, then email watersecurity@actew.com.au or phone Ron Forrester at the Bulk Water Alliance on 6248 3111

The initial face-to-face workshops will be held as follows:

Monday September 22 at Belconnen from 12-2pm

Wednesday September 24 at Woden from 6-8pm

Thursday September 25 at Civic from 5.30-7.30pm

Saturday October 11 at Tuggeranong (time to be advised)

The community is urged to call ACTEW's Water Security – Major Projects information line on 6248 3563 or email watersecurity@actew.com.au to register.

Frogwatch “Springs” Into Action in July

Dr Beth Mantle

The snow has only just fallen on the slopes of the Brindabella Ranges, but despite the cold conditions, planning and organisation for the 2008 Frogwatch Spring Census has begun!

Each year, over 200 Frogwatch participants monitor frog populations at approximately 140 sites around the





ACT and Region. However, before they are sent out into the field with their tape-recorders, each Frogwatch volunteer attends a training seminar where they learn all about the fascinating world of frogs, how to monitor them, and ways to help protect them and their habitats. This year, each participant will receive a free full-colour poster depicting the Frogs of the ACT & Region, as well as their monitoring kit.

You can find out more about the Frogwatch Program on the Ginninderra Catchment Group's website (www.ginninderralandcare.org.au), and keep an eye out for the new Frogwatch News Updates. Each month, amphibian anecdotes of local, national and international interest are posted up on the website for you to enjoy. This month, you can learn about frogs that sprout claws for defence against predators, how the Cane Toad is impacting on crocodile populations in the Top End, and what ACT scientists are doing to improve the conservation status of the Corroboree frog. Just click on the "News" tab at the top of the Ginninderra Catchment Group's home page.

In other news, Frogwatch was featured in the Canberra Times this month. If you missed your copy on the news stand, you can view it online here. Frogwatch also appeared on ABC666 Radio, and you can listen to the interview here.

If you would like more information about the ACT and Region Frogwatch Program, contact Dr Beth Mantle on 02 6278 3309 or waterwatch@ginninderralandcare.org.au.

Local High School Students working with the Community in bringing life back to Tuggeranong Creek

Steve Welch, Southern ACT Catchment Group Coordinator

Southern ACT Catchment Group (SACTCG) recently launched its Catchment Management Strategy. Hard copies are available by contacting our office or view it online at www.sactcg.org

Integral to the Catchment Strategy is the involvement of the local community. Our vision for Southern ACT is 'An environmentally aware catchment community that has the commitment, knowledge, skills and capacity to improve the health of our landscape'.

A current example of community involvement is the work occurring on the Tuggeranong Homestead creek-line. The project to rehabilitate the creek-line began in 2001 with funding from ACT Government enabling a study to be conducted into the feasibility of returning water flows into this section of the original creek-line from the nearby stormwater channel. The end result of this study showed that whereas it would be possible to return some flows, the cost may be prohibitive. SACTCG along with the Minders of Tuggeranong Homestead (MOTH) and with support from the Homestead lessee decided to start returning life to Tuggeranong Creek by clearing some of the woody weed regrowth from the original Homestead orchard and by undertaking some planting of indigenous native trees, shrubs, forbs and grasses.

This is a community project undertaken jointly by MOTH and SACTCG with help and sponsorship from PriceWaterhouse Coopers (including a substantial cash contribution and participation of their staff in project activities) and with the involvement of students and staff from Calwell High School (CHS). Since November 2007 over two thousand natives have been planted in the area to stabilize the banks and help shift the balance of vegetation away from weeds. Blackberry growth has been cut and poisoned



Tuggeranong Creek-line May Day Work-party and African Lovegrass dug out and taken away. A recent productive week saw teams from Conservation Volunteers Australia help progress the planting and restoration of this site.

Through the Adopt-a-School program CHS has committed a number of the Year 8 and 9 students, their teacher and school chaplain to the Homestead project. By being actively involved with all stages of the project from planning to monitoring outcomes it is envisaged the students will gain a broader knowledge of conservation and land management issues. Year 9 students will undertake a vegetation survey of the site as part of their Term 3 Ecology studies.

The plan is to continue this cross-community involvement at Tuggeranong Homestead with further work-parties to maintain and add to the current plantings. The creek-line will be returned to predominantly native vegetation and hopefully one day have water returned to it, providing a valuable refuge for native plants and animals and increasing biodiversity in suburbia.

Contact Steve Welch: 6296 6400 info@sactcg.org

FOG adopts Hall Cemetery

Margaret Ning

Friends of Grasslands

Friends of Grasslands (FOG) has been a member of the Parkcare leaders group for many years and is well known in Canberra, but more for its advocacy and education work rather than its on-ground efforts, although it has held several working bees in the Conder woodland reserves over the years. Readers who are FOG members will also be aware that FOG's main on-ground activity has centred around Old Cooma Common, where working with the Cooma Monaro Shire Council it established a grassland reserve about ten years ago. Many FOG members have suggested that FOG also ought to have a Canberra site and so in recent months, after discussion with the ACT Government, it decided to hold regular working bees at Hall Cemetery.

The cemetery represents one of the most diverse remaining areas of yellow box/red gum grassy woodland. Much of the site has been cleared of trees, but it contains the characteristic understorey species of the defined endangered woodland community. In the grassland area, the dominant grass is kangaroo grass, but many others are present such as native wallaby, spear, snow, wheat and weeping grasses. The list of wild flowers is impressive and include milkmaid, flax lily, yellow rush lily, common and clustered everlasting, scaly buttons, blue devil, bluebells twining glycine, scrambled egg, raspwort and many more, but the most precious is the Hall Cemetery (Tarengo) leek orchid, one of only



Grasses and forbs being planted where woody weed regrowth has been removed.



three known populations. The woodlands that are also part of the cemetery are also very diverse, containing several local eucalyptus, including yellow box and Blakely's redgum.

FOG held two working bees at the site in April this year, and a number of FOG members and Hall residents attended. The working bees were organised following several visits to the site and discussions on and off site with Environment ACT. The plan was to remove unwanted eucalyptus regeneration from the grassland areas as it is seen as a particular threat to the leek orchid, and general weeding and restoration of the grassland and adjoining woodland areas. The site is a good one for FOG to manage, as it is relatively small and provides an opportunity to learn about many aspects of grassy woodlands and their management. More working bees are planned for October 11 this year.

Fog Website: www.fog.org.au

This fantastic display trailer is available for hire from the Molonglo Catchment Group. Many posters, handouts and other materials are also available for loan or you can tailor displays to your specific theme.

For bookings call Maryke Booth on 6280 4128

Email: maryke@shopbasis.com.au



Greening Australia Update

By Jemma Johnston, Volunteer Coordinator, Greening Australia Capital Region



Over the past three years through the ACT Land Keepers program alone, Greening Australia has held 245 community events, including: * 113 planting events * 49 seed propagation events * 36 workshops/field days (includes bird identification training, bus tours) * 21 presentations * 11 site maintenance events, and 15 nursery maintenance events. Through Land Keepers, the community has contributed 9,521 volunteer people days and more than 44,503 community hours to conserving rural and non urban land in the ACT.

A special focus of this effort has been the Lower Cotter Catchment, where 50,000 native trees and shrubs will be planted in 2008 to improve water quality and biodiversity. A community planting day in the Lower Cotter, in association with the ACT Government and 666 ABC on April 6, saw a record attendance of over 500 volunteers and close to 6,000 trees planted. Our most recent event, World Environment Day, saw 170 volunteers plant nearly 4,500 trees and shrubs. To date this year we are more than half way to meeting our target of 50,000 trees.

Around the region, a \$1.9 million Boorowa River Recovery (BRR) project with partners such as the Lachlan CMA, TransGrid, Boorowa Regional Catchment Coordinating Committee, Boorowa Council, NSW Fisheries and

landholders, has rehabilitated a remarkable 453ha of river in the Boorowa Catchment.

GA has been busy collecting seed and setting up 20 new Seed Production Areas to help boost native seed supply. In 2008/09 will also trial a new Whole of Paddock Rehabilitation (WOPR) pilot to combat growing land degradation problems, restore paddock health and provide multiple farm production benefits.

All in all, Greening Australia expects 2008/09 to be another exciting, 'hands-on' year!

*Greening Australia Capital Region 6253 3035
jjohnston@act.greeningaustralia.org.au*

New Mt Taylor Walking Track

By Nadia Kuzmanoski, Senior Ranger, Parks, Conservation and Lands

Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, John Hargreaves officially opened the Mt Taylor Walking Track in Tuggeranong on Thursday 24 July 2008.

This track replaces the Richmond Fellowship Track which was closed and rehabilitated in 2007. The Richmond Fellowship track once climbed steeply to the summit causing environmental erosion and public safety issues.

The Mount Taylor Walking Track was constructed in Autumn 2008 following a commitment by the Chief Minister. Work was undertaken by Mr Dave Smith from SCOPE, a specialised walking track construction and rehabilitation company.



The new track is 1 m wide, 860 m in length and there are steps, drainage, signage and seating. It was designed and constructed to minimise impacts such as erosion and protect pink-tailed worm lizard habitat while still providing a fitness challenge to walkers.

Vandalism is an ongoing issue in the Mount Taylor Nature Reserve due to its proximity to the urban area. During construction of the new trail repeated vandalism occurred, causing damage to equipment, material and signage and delaying construction progress.

“I encourage all Canberrans to take advantage of our sunny winter days and take a walk on the new Mt Taylor trail,” said Mr Hargreaves.

Waterwatch School Holiday Program

By Tanya Rucosky, Waterwatch Facilitator, Environment Protection and Heritage



Have you ever wondered what kinds of mini-beasts inhabit Lake Tuggeranong and Lake Ginninderra? Have you ever thought about where our drinking water comes from, and where stormwater goes? Could you build a clay and paper mini-beast that eats blood and swims with its front legs? Children on school holidays during July were offered the chance to attend the inaugural Waterwatch School Holiday Program, which was held at the lakes in Tuggeranong and Belconnen.

Tanya Rucosky-Noakes (ACT Waterwatch Facilitator), Stephen Skinner (Southern ACT Catchment Group Waterwatch Coordinator) and Beth Mantle (Ginninderra Catchment Group Waterwatch Coordinator) led the program, which was a huge success. Over 20 children attended, despite the freezing conditions at Lake Tuggeranong in the first week, and spent a full day engaged in water-themed activities, such as dip-netting and nature journalling.

If you would like to be notified about the next Waterwatch School Holiday Program, contact Tanya Rucosky-Noakes on 02 6207 2246 or tanya.rucoskynoakes@act.gov.au

