

JAN/FEB WORKPARTY CALENDAR

(please check with groups to confirm
January dates)

13 Jan, 10 Feb

Isaacs Ridge ParkCare

20 Jan, 17 Feb

Cooleman Ridge ParkCare

19 Jan, 9 Feb, 16 Feb

Friends of Tidbinbilla ParkCare

27 Jan, 24 Feb

Friends of Featherstone Gardens

6 Jan, 3 Feb

Farrer Ridge ParkCare

6 Jan, 3 Feb

Red Hill ParkCare

27 Jan, 24 Feb

Urambi Hills ParkCare

20 Jan, 17 Feb

Mount Taylor Parkcare

13 Jan, 10 Feb

Griffith Woodland Volunteer Group

Contact the SACTCG office for further details

SOUTHERN NEWS

DECEMBER 2018

From the Office

From the staff and committee of the SACTCG, we hope that you all have a safe and happy New Year and festive break!

The office will be staffed from the 7th January, with Martine and Fiona away until the first week in February.



Protecting our Catchment Project Update

The three catchment groups have now met with ACT Government EPSDD staff to discuss potential models for the catchment groups to be more financially sustainable. This is an opportunity for us to examine how we can expand the appeal of Landcare and its impact (including both social and environmental) across the ACT. The executive will report further on these plans early next year.

Meeting with the Minister

On 8 November a delegation of ParkCare volunteers, with Martine as the Catchment Group representative met with Minister Gentleman to put our views on a number of matters (including Ranger resourcing, value of ParkCare and Catchment Groups and contributions to the 30-year celebrations for ParkCare and Canberra Nature Park management plan). Thanks to Kathy Eyles for leading the meeting. The Minister has agreed to meet with the ParkCare and Catchment Group delegation regularly.

SACTCG success with ACT Environment Grants

SACTCG applied for 6 ACT Environment Grants this year and have been successful with all 6! We look forward to delivering these next year with both rural landholders and member groups:

- Tidbinbilla Floodplain Restoration \$30350
- Rehabilitation of Natural Temperate Grassland at Mugga Mugga Cottage \$25520
- Protecting Woodlands in the Spring Station Creek Catchment \$37800
- Habitat Connectivity in the Uriarra Creek Catchment \$6590
- Dam Habitat restoration in Urambi Hills \$2995
- Restoration of Griffith Woodland \$6620

Turtle Spotters

TURTLE SIGHTINGS NEEDED Help Australian turtle researchers to understand distribution and behaviour of native Aussie turtles. TurtleSAT is a new website where communities are mapping the location of freshwater turtles in waterways and wetlands across the country (<https://www.turtlesat.org.au>). For more detail, see this promotional video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qS5g6b92jUw&feature=youtu.be>

Environmentalist of the Year 2018

Environmentalist of the Year Award 2018
Congratulations to Sarah Sharp on being named ACT Environmentalist of the Year 2018, at the Conservation

Council gathering on 26 October. Sarah is well known for her expertise and leadership in matters concerning Natural Temperate Grassland and grassland weeds, such as African Lovegrass.

Holiday Reading

Two recent articles that might be of interest

<https://www.theland.com.au/story/5789712/snowy-melt-can-be-hit-and-miss-but-releases-will-be-fine/>

<https://theconversation.com/the-small-patch-of-bush-over-your-back-fence-might-be-key-to-a-species-survival->

SatuSteam Weed Control

On Thursday, 14th December, on a wet miserable morning, a few of us met Jeremy, the Managing Director from Weedtechnics to talk about his weed control method using steam.

In a nutshell, it was a trailer mounted unit, with a water tank and a long hose, which killed the weeds using a mix of saturated steam and boiling water. The water heats to 120^c, and uses approximately 10 litres a minute. The unit came with three different heads to tackle different situations, and the hose is up to 60 meters long, so it would be simple to get into a lot of spaces where a vehicle couldn't.

Jeremy said that the system is more efficient than other thermal units 'due to the efficient heat transfer into the basal regenerative tissue of the plants, giving economical production rates and reduced costs over several growing seasons'.

There are limitations to Parkcare and urban Landcare groups, as the system just wouldn't work in a backpack so it does need to be trailer mounted or attached to a vehicle.

The system is 3 times faster than hand weeding, and reduces many issues associated with chemical control – cost of the chemical, weather conditions spray drift and health and safety concerns.

Like chemical treatment, follow up is all important, but it was a great chemical free system which hopefully will be taken up by ACT Government and others in time. Thank you to Sandy from GCG for organizing it.



Photos by Fiona Spier

MEMBER GROUP HAPPENINGS

Griffith Woodlands Volunteer Group

We are delighted to announce the success of our SACTCG facilitated application for an Environment Grant from the ACT Government - what a year it has been! This is a result of a lot of hard work and perseverance, and our sincere appreciation goes to all those involved. This grant will allow us not only to have a master planting plan drawn up, but also to enable us to implement our own “greening” of the woodland project that we can carry out over the years as plants, funds and labour allow!

The grant is also for plants, seed, spraying and more tools. Our grant application was accompanied by strong letters of support from Red Hill Regenerators, Transport Canberra and City Services (Rachel Tokley) and the Griffith Narrabundah Community Association – our heartfelt thanks particularly go to these loyal and committed supporters.

This project is of course in addition to the very welcome and necessary FoG grant we received with the help of the SACTCG to tackle the infestations of African Lovegrass and Chilean Needle Grass that continue to threaten the woodland and crowd out our special native grasses. This Friends of Grassland (FoG) grant will be the perfect prelude to the Environment Grant initiative. A professional contractor will be engaged to spray these grasses in late 2018 or early 2019. FoG representatives visiting the Griffith Woodland to assess the application were most impressed with our efforts so far and with the quality and potential of the woodland. We will provide further updates once this project is underway.

We continue to log species on Canberra Nature Map, and now have documentation of 75 plant species.

These comprise 32 local native species plus 7 non-local natives and 37 exotics. Of the exotic species, 7 are classified as noxious/high risk, 7 as medium weeds and 23 as minor weeds. These figures include exotics that have been removed in working bees. We have also logged 1 fungus, 4 birds and 2 insects. Please feel free to send through photos taken on site that you think may be of interest, or log them yourself on CanberraNatureMap.

<https://canberra.naturemapr.org/Community/LocationGuide/2028>



Photos by Griffith Woodland Volunteer Group

Coolleman Ridge ParkCare

While monitoring the groups two Vegwatch patches in November, we noticed that the exotic grasses were fewer and less vigorous than the native grasses, presumably due to the lack of rain over winter and spring.

This was particularly noticeable with the lack of wild oats. However, there were some native species which had been present last year which were not seen this year. It takes us about 3 hours to monitor each site, and then the data has to be uploaded and sent to Sarah Sharp.

Our Friday morning group has reported lovely growth of native grasses near the Kathner Street dam. Some vigorous growth of *Austrostipa bigeniculata*, and also some native *Eragrostis*. The phalaris clumps are gradually being whittled away, and there is hope that most will be gone by the end of this summer.



Arminel at a Vegewatch site. Photo by Linda Spinaze

Mount Taylor Parkcare

After a forecast of warm weather, the morning quickly turned to dust and thunderstorms - we

sheltered in the cars for 15 mins and then with blue sky beckoning set out on our Butterfly walk - little patches of warmth and sunshine saw a few beauties take flight and Suzi identified the key plants for particular butterfly species including climbing Mistletoe, Cherry Ballart, *Brachychiton*, *Lomandra filiformis* (small) and *Bursaria spinosa*. As for butterflies, we saw Meadow Argus; Painted Lady; Amethyst Hairstreak; Common grass blue: Fiery Copper; Chequered Copper, Dark Purple Azure and the pupae of the Bronze Flat on the brachy.

The highlight was sighting the Dark Purple Azure - thank you to Martjin de Kool and Matthew Frawley for sharing their pics - brilliant spotting by Belinda Stokes and a first-time sighting for Mt Taylor and for many of the butterfly peeps - with the reactions and gushing we knew this was a 'special' and with the attached photos we can share this exquisite nature on our doorstep.



Dark Purple Azure. Photo by Martjin de Kool

Farrer Ridge ParkCare

The Farrer Ridge ParkCare group has continued removing and treating weeds. In November, we had three groups work along the 30-metre zone at the

area adjacent to the Nature Reserve and at the back of Farrer houses. One group started from the Athllon Drive end, another group worked in the mid-section, and the third group worked from an eastern corner towards the mid-section, so it was good coverage. This was aimed to reduce any bushfire hazards, so we removed and treated many woody weeds. See photo below.



There have been reports of prickly pear, and the group on that November work found some, and pulled some prickly pear/ cactus out.



The view from the top of Farrer Hill looking towards the “Brindabellas” and overlooking the suburbs of Tuggeranong, is enjoyed by many people who walk

along the Interpretive signed Nature Trail, and perhaps rest on the seat. This area was once carpeted in *Verbascum*, and we have had some impact in reducing their numbers. The photo was taken in August, so the effects of the months of drought are visible.



Photos by Farrer Ridge Parkcare

Report by Wendy Rainbird, Convenor, Farrer Ridge ParkCare group, December, 2018.

Red Hill Regenerators

Paul Williamson and Michael Mulvaney have produced *Ties to Red Hill* a second volume of wonderful book of poetry, photos and drawings about Red Hill. Copies will be available for \$15 each. Email Michael at mulvaney@netspeed.com.au if you would like to buy a copy.

Friends of Tidbinbilla

Finally, our Parkcare seat is up and running again, after the kangaroos dug it up trying to lick the cement.

Murray assured me they won't be able to dig it up again, we will see...



Photos by Murray Aston

Healthy Waterways Projects

We thought you might be interested in all of the infrastuctre work going on in the Southern suburbs, and all of fences up around the new wetland sites.

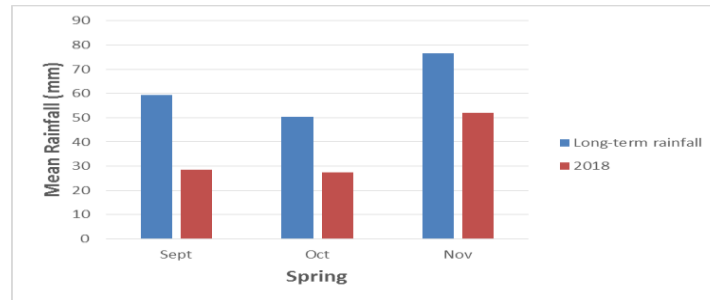
SACTCG have had some interest in forming new urban Landcare groups around some of these wetlands (particularly Holder) and are keen to form new groups and engage the community around these sites. If you are interested in new wetland groups, let us know. Below is a list of 19 projects under the Healthy Waterways Program.

SACTCG WATERWATCH NEWS: SPRING 2018

Spring was **Water Bug Blitz** season. By the end of October most waterways in our region had their macroinvertebrate populations inspected by a number of volunteers and school students, with supervision by a Waterwatch Coordinator (usually me 😊). Well timed rain in November pushed a couple of surveys in to early Summer. Not ideal.

Rainfall was only half the long-term average for most of Spring. Four of our sites were dry in September with some water returning after a couple of wet days in mid-October.

November's apparent rain was still well below the long-term average. (See BOM graph below.)



RAINFALL STATISTICS COURTESY OF BUREAU OF METEOROLOGY

Teams update:

September saw a number of new volunteers and a team join our Waterwatch program. Rodney Yeo has taken up the challenge of monitoring the remote Naas Valley (only accessible by 4WD). The newly formed 'Friends of Stranger Pond' group have taken up the monitoring of their namesake, and Peter Horniak joined Ben Bryant to help with the north end of Lake Tuggeranong. Ben has taken this opportunity to retire his services. Also leaving us this time is **Fleur Horan** who has been Waterwatching since 2003.

Around the waterways:

From the data so far received, almost all of our rivers and streams suffered from very low flows this spring, though some fared better than others. The **Cotter**, **Paddy's** and **Gudgenby** rivers and **Tuggeranong Creek** remained clear all season. However, the **Murrumbidgee** had a muddy start and end to spring. **Gibraltar Creek** was the only tributary to show reasonable flows and over the three months in spite of the lack of rainfall. The **Naas** and **Tidbinbilla** rivers both had no running water at their lowest ends by November. The **Tidbinbilla Sanctuary's** pond system survived better than usual, recording no reportable water quality issues.

Minor tributaries all suffered from lack of rain. In **Namadgi National Park** smaller creeks remained dry and the upland bog that is **Hospital Creek** suffered high turbidity, low oxygen and high nutrient concentrations for lack of water. Creeks with good surrounding vegetation such as **Swamp Creek** maintained clear pools even as they dried. Others like **Barneys Gully** became muddy or murky.

Around the dam's things couldn't get any worse. One on **Coleman Ridge** became completely dry for the first time in 10 years. **McQuoid's Dam** at **Westwood Farm** was so low you could walk across it on an exposed dry mud 'bridge'. The urban lakes and ponds had spikes in mud levels at various times and locations. Some was the result of some rain after prolonged stillness for example **Stranger**, **Point Hut** and **Goodwin Village Ponds**. Other parts because of construction work especially the southern end of **Lake Tuggeranong**. **Isabella Pond** remained closed over most of spring opening to water inflows and public access just as November ended. The **urban drains** ran low and clear for most of the season.



What the water bugs had to say about Spring

Some surprisingly water bug surveys were conducted this spring. In spite of low water levels several 'reaches' (sections of rivers, creeks or lakes) managed to host **'excellent'** populations of aquatic invertebrates. These included the upper and lower ends of the **Murrumbidgee River** in the A.C.T., the **Cotter River** above and below the main dam as well as the **Gudgenby River** and **Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve** 'sub-catchments'. **Gibraltar Creek** continued to provide an **'excellent' condition**. A red fresh water crayfish (*Euastacus crassus*), pictured, was also discovered enjoying the pristine waters of Gibraltar Creek.



'Good' populations were found along the middle parts of the **Murrumbidgee River** and in **Paddy's River**, as well as in **Namadgi National Park**. Two rural creeks;

Swamp and **McQuoid's** creeks also had **'good'** levels of bug populations. Ian

Crabb, teacher of the 'Ed Shed' program at Lions Youth Haven gave a clue to condition of this creek revealing that run off from the neighbouring golf course over winter months may have contributed to its healthy state.

Other places providing **'good'** bug conditions included our major lakes; **Stranger Pond**, **Point Hut Pond** and the north end of **Lake Tuggeranong** as well as both ends of **Tuggeranong Creek**.

'Poor' habitats for water bugs were revealed at **Goodwin Village Pond** and the southern end of **Lake Tuggeranong**. The **urban drain system**, of course, provides barely any habitat and always gets a **'degraded'** water bug score regardless of the water flowing down it.

Volunteer events:

Our Waterwatchers were put through their paces at the **spring QA/QC** event day. 7 teams attended and successfully renewed their certification. **Outward Bound Australia's** Coral Bailey also successfully completed an assessment of their 2 kits.

Waterwatch Education;



Water bugs in spring also bring out many school and scouting groups. **Caroline Chisholm High School** had year 9 students completing their major ecology project. This included field surveys at Pine Island assisted by Ben Huttner-Koros from Molonglo Catchment Group and I. Bruno Ferronato from Ginninderra Catchment Group help me with some year 7s and 8s from the same school catch and sort water bugs at Goodwin Village Pond. **Caroline Chisholm High School** students and teacher Joe Jennings appeared as guests on our **Radio Landcare** show. Also, with my supervision **Lake Tuggeranong College 'Sustainability Unit'** examined the lake and completed their **QA/QC** assessment. **Lions Youth Haven 'Ed Shed'** student caught water bugs at McQuoid's Creek and completed their **QA/QC**. Bruno also helped me with the **Tidbinbilla Open Day Water Bugs** activity for kids, and I went with him to **Yass**

to help host an activity for over 1500 primary students from around NSW as part of their **NAIDOC week** celebrations and gave him a hand with the **Gungahlin Scout group's** water bug activity at their adjacent wetland. Bruno and I helped Ben with a water bug 'incursion' at **Stromlo High School**.

Picture: Joe with Caroline Chisholm students at Pine Island.

A huge thank you to all those groups and individuals involved in collecting data. To view Upper Murrumbidgee Waterwatch data go to <http://www.act.waterwatch.org.au>. For more information contact the SACTCG Waterwatch Coordinator on 62966400 or at waterwatch@sactcg.org.au.

Contact Us

Southern ACT Catchment Group Inc

Unit C8 Erindale Business Park
2 Lansell Circuit Wanniasa ACT 2903
Office: 62966400
www.sactcg.org.au

Martine Franco (Executive Officer)

M: 0447223396

E: info@sactcg.org.au

Fiona Spier (Project Officer)

E: projects@sactcg.org.au

Martin Lind (Waterwatch Coordinator)

M: 0447870448

E: waterwatch@sactcg.org.au

Facebook page: [ACT Landcare and Waterwatch](#)

The Southern ACT Catchment Group gratefully receives funding support from the ACT Government

