

APRIL/MAY WORKPARTY CALENDAR

14 April 12 May

Isaacs Ridge ParkCare

14 April, 19 May

Cooleman Ridge ParkCare

13 April, 11 May

Friends of Tidbinbilla ParkCare

28 April, 26 May

Friends of Featherstone Gardens

7 April, 5 May

Farrer Ridge ParkCare

7 April , 5 May

Red Hill ParkCare

28 April, 26 May

Urambi Hills ParkCare

21 April , 19 May

Mount Taylor ParkCare

14 April, 12 May

Griffith Woodland Volunteer Group

Contact the SACTCG office for further details

SOUTHERN NEWS

MARCH 2019

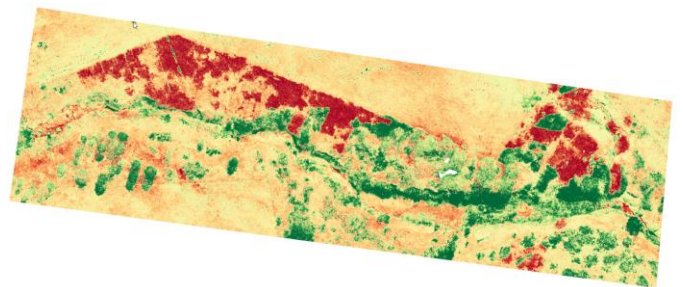
From the Office

Lots is happening behind the scenes to secure future funding, and we are also working on jazzing up our very old and tired website.

SACTCG presented at the Legislative Assembly Inquiry on Nature in the City last week with our partner Catchment Groups and Maxine Cooper (our new Landcare ACT Chair). Thanks to members who came along to support, You can read the transcript here: <http://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2017/comms/environment13.pdf>

Current Projects

We are currently running several interesting projects with our ParkCare Groups and rural Landholders. These include Griffith Woodland reveg and Urambi Hills dam restoration. Below is some interesting imagery taken by the drone which sprayed Blackberry along Spring Station Creek. They show treated areas by highlighting plant health.



Friends of Grasslands Small Grants

Friends of Grasslands (FoG) is offering a small number of grants of \$500–\$1500 each in 2019 to support projects that promote investment in the understanding and management of grassy ecosystems. Any individual or organisation can apply.

For further information and the Application Form please check out FoG's website at <http://www.fog.org.au/>.

Please address all email enquiries to supportedprojects@fog.org.au.

Closing date for applications is **Monday 15 April 2019**.

If your group is interested and haven't yet contacted the office, call us ASAP please.

African Feather Grass

An incursion of African Feather Grass has been found near Casuarina Sands along the Cotter Road.

Please familiarize yourself with this weed (see the poster at the end of the newsletter) and report sightings.

Australia Day Honors

Three members of the ACT Landcare community were recognized in this year's Australia Day honors list;

- Frederick Peter Fawke, Dunlop ACT, for service to the community of Canberra
- John Robert Ive, Flynn ACT, for service to the superfine wool growing industry.
- Glenys Patulny, Kambah ACT, for service to the community of Tuggeranong.

Congratulations to all of you.

Plastic Free July

Plastics impact our spaces in a number of ways. I'm sure you can think of many times when you've had to deal with plastic in our urban open spaces.

Help spread the word about plastic impacts and participate in Plastic Free July;

- Be involved in an opportunity tackling single use plastics and the problems they cause our environment
- Participate in a citizen science project logging data onto the NSW local litter check tool

For more information go to <https://www.plasticfreejuly.org/>

If your group would be interested in participating in a plastic litter picking event or would like more information contact ACT Nowaste by calling Canberra Connect on 132281.

Parkcare Update

For parkcare volunteers there are a few training opportunities coming up;

Volunteer Supervisor Training for Convenors:
11th April

Convenor meeting: **15th May**

Also look out for dates for Chimkent and First Aid training dates in June.

A reminder Parkcare groups (with chemcert training) can use herbicide products containing active ingredients Glyphosate (Round Up), MCPA (Agitone 750), Fluroxypr (Starane) and Metsulfuron Methyl (Brushoff). but TCCS Urban Parks groups **can only use Glyphosate**.

Volunteers who don't have chemcert training can only do cut and dab under the supervision of a chemcert trained volunteer.

MEMBER GROUP HAPPENINGS

Urambi Hills Parkcare Group

On the 31 March the Urambi Hill group helped pit neighbouring farmers John and Carol from Amberly Farm with some maintenance on their 4-year-old plantings, taking off tree guards etc.

Looking forward to an update on how the day went.

Griffith Woodlands Volunteer Group

It has been a very productive quarter, with some wonderful results already showing in the maturing grasses. We continue to identify new species of plants and animals, and with the retention of old growth logs that we have preserved on the woodland floor, we hope to foster a more diverse ecosystem. Weed mitigation measures, principally aimed at African Lovegrass and Chilean Needle Grass, have yielded concrete and decisive results.

The wheels have been turning (while the weeds have been growing) working towards spending our ACT Environment Grant funds during 2019. Landscaper Barbara Payne of Quandong designs has been preparing a site survey, site map and preparing a suggested plant list. To lay the groundwork for this, several site meetings have been held with TCCS and other relevant authorities to make sure that the planting plan complies with fire and other regulations. We are nearly at the stage of ordering plants, with the aim of holding some planting sessions in Autumn and Spring 2019 – watch this space! Barbara came along to our November working bee to meet the group and was most impressed with our enthusiasm and progress on our site. We look forward to continuing our work with her.

The Chilean Needle Grass and African Lovegrass on site have been kept in check by contractor Jim Barriesheff (pictured L) as part of our Friends of Grasslands (FoG)

Grant to tackle these devastating weeds. The grant has been mostly acquitted and we have enjoyed several site visits from the FoG projects team to monitor progress. The projects team bring expert eyes to our site, and there is always a lot to learn from them. Their encouragement and support are always appreciated.

Griffith Woodland is mowed regularly during the summer months by TCCS. During 2018 a new mowing plan was drawn up for the woodland in collaboration with Rachel Tokley (TCCS Volunteer Coordinator). The plan aimed at allowing open grassy areas to mature and grow, while meeting fire regulations and maintaining pedestrian access through the reserve.



The plan was approved, and we have been enjoying seeing the grassy areas evolve over the growing season. The first mow has now been done, and a follow up meeting was recently held with TCCS services to review and refine the mowing plan. We continue to delight in the evolution of our woodland and our thanks go to all the supporters and hard workers whose combined efforts contribute to this worthwhile project. The summer storms have afforded some spectacular evening skies (pictured above).



We welcome Allan McLean to our network – Allan is working as the new TCCS Volunteer Coordinator and met us on site recently. Libby

Coolleman Ridge ParkCare

Blue Crowsfoot or *Erodium crinitum*.

This native, Blue Crowsfoot or *Erodium crinitum*, was located above Monkman St during the February work party. It seems to pop up unexpectedly during some summers.

Uncommon but widespread in our area, its leaves, roots and seeds were eaten by the Aborigines. It is easily distinguished from the exotic version as it is the only one with blue flowers. The exotic ones have pink flowers.



Blue Crowsfoot Photo by Linda Spinaze

Crumbweed or *Dysphania pumilio*

Over the past few weeks I have noticed a small herb growing in many places on the Ridge. I first saw it years ago on the Ridge, and have not seen it since. I knew it as *Chenopodium pumilio*, but now it is known as *Dysphania pumilio*. This native aromatic plant has mealy-textured leaves, and grows about 10cm high. It grows in disturbed and bare soils, and can be found in gardens and roadsides. It is now considered an exotic weed in Europe and was probably introduced via Australian wool imports.



Crumbweed (Chenopodium pumilio) now known as Dysphania pumilio) Photo by Linda Spinaze

Linda

Mount Taylor Parkcare

Big thanks to the hard-working team that sawed through 100's of woody weeds the lower southern slopes on Sunday over the last few months.

We have also arranged to have a combined meet with our Urambi Hills colleagues on the first weekend in **June** to mark World Environment Day and will help with a planting around a dam.

Anne and I will be helping to organise the 30 year Park care celebrations as well.

Parks have upgraded the fire and walking trail and the entry fencing from the Mannheim entrance.



Red Algae on the dam (Photo Friends of Mt Taylor)

Kathy

Farrer Ridge ParkCare

Our ParkCare group met on Sunday March 3rd, and cleared weeds in a section along a ridge behind the Farrer houses. We were not pleased to see some asparagus fern, which we pulled out, and some Prickly Pear cactus, which was removed and bagged, with care! I have written a brief report to go in the Farrer Neighbourhood Watch Newsletter, that is delivered to all houses, and asking people to remove any asparagus fern and Prickly Pear cactus from their gardens, as they are invasive weeds.

Near Farrer Hill along the Nature Trail, a member proposed planting acacias and such on the eastern slope, so as to reduce the progress of *Verbascum* down the slope. I met with the ParkCare Ranger, Marty, on Tuesday to assess the site, as he could bring in an auger to make deeper planting holes. The problems are:

- The area is very rocky.
- The 3 month BOM forecast for rainfall is that it is likely that we could get average autumn rain

in the ACT, but the temperatures look like being high, with an 80% chance of higher than average temperatures.

See: <http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/outlooks/#/temperature/maximum/median/seasonal>

On our way down the hill, I pointed out dying *Cassinias*, and the general thinning of that once delightful woodland.

Many are noticing the dying of trees, even local *Eucalypts*, and the harshness of last summer killing plants in gardens, that have survived the millennial drought.

At the Fringe Forum on Bushfire Plans in the ACT on Thursday 7th March, we heard and saw about the use of digital mapping programs used to map bushfires, or likely bushfire behavior, with provision to feed in local parameters: vegetation, soils, litter, terrain and aspect, and such. It is very impressive. There was discussion about the impacts happening around the changing climate, with increasing temperatures, records being broken (200 in Australia last summer), increases in lightning strikes especially in summer, and increased risk of bushfires.

Wendy

CHiP Launch



Waterwatch and Mick Gentleman MLA launched the 2018 CHiP Report on 29th March at Questacon.

The 2018 Waterwatch Catchment Health Indicator Program (CHIP) report contains an impressive 2,493 water quality, water bug and riverbank vegetation assessments conducted at over 230 sites across the ACT region in the past year.

The report has found that 5 were rated 'excellent', 37 waterways were 'good', 49 were 'fair', 3 were 'poor' and none were 'degraded'.

While the results were reasonably positive, the 2018 scores declined around 10 per cent from 2017 due to the driest autumn since 2004 and the driest winter since 1994 for the ACT region.

This underscores the negative impacts of climate change and the importance of building resilience into waterways and their surrounding catchments.

The ACT Healthy Waterways joint ACT and Commonwealth initiative is improving water quality and increasing the amount of plants both in the water and along the edges of our rivers and wetlands.

Mick thanked the more than 200 Waterwatch volunteers that have undertaken this work. We've been hearing from volunteers who have been monitoring for more than ten years that they've never seen their sites so dry.

Waterwatch is supported by \$2 million over five years from the ACT Healthy Waterways and also receives funding through Icon Water.

Heritage Walks as Part of the Heritage Festival

The Conservation Council are showcasing the natural treasures of the ACT Region at the 2019 Canberra Heritage Festival. This year's theme is "Space" and our events explore some of the lesser known natural 'spaces' in the ACT as well as new aspects of some old favourites.

Be one of the few lucky Canberrans to have truly explored Kama and Kinlyside or rekindle your passion for Mulligan's Flat and Red Hill. Explore a fascinating mix of heritage; from an ancient geological site, to one of Canberra's first water reservoirs, to a modern-day street art Tardis.

This program involves guided walks at Red Hill, Kama Reserve, Mulligans Flat and Kinlyside Reserve during April 2019.



ART IN ACTION

THEME: SPACE & SPACES

11-19 APRIL

YOU ARE INVITED TO THE OPENING OF THE
ARTISTS SOCIETY OF CANBERRA/ACT CATCHMENT GROUPS

ART EXHIBITION

Hosted by the Artists Society in partnership with The Canberra and Region
Heritage Festival

Commencing at 5.30 for 6.00 pm on Friday 12 April 2019

Level 1 Atrium, in the Canberra Centre overlooking the Canberra Times Fountain, Ainslie
Place

Includes prize giving and refreshments.

RSVP: secretary@asoc.net.au



BIOSECURITY THREAT

African feather grass

Cenchrus macrourus



(left) seed head, (above) fibrous roots and rhizomes and dense patch of plants, (below) a large infestation in the ACT



African feather grass is a highly invasive clump-forming warm season grass that mainly spreads via rhizomes but can also spread by seed. It is a threat to riparian areas, wet pasture and grassland. It forms dense infestations that completely eliminate other plants. Control requires multiple applications of herbicide and manual removal.

Distinguishing features

It can grow up to 2m high; light green leaves are over 1cm wide and ribbed.

The flower spike is long (up to 40cm) but narrow (1-2cm wide). It has a network of fibrous roots and sturdy rhizomes.

What to do if you see it

Report sightings to Citizen Science websites/apps like Canberra Nature Map <http://canberra.naturemapr.org/> with a close up photograph. These sites are monitored and an automatic alert will be sent to the Biosecurity Emergency Response Team.



ACT
Government



SACTCG WATERWATCH UPDATE: SUMMER 2019

This newsletter I am focusing on **Lake Tuggeranong**, as it has been the most dramatically effected by events over the last 12 months. Many of our other waterways have also suffered badly due to the prolonged drought, but I will address these in the next newsletter. Below Left: Village Creek early March showing blue dye from dead algae cells (LStephens)



The southern 'wetland' end of Lake Tuggeranong had concerning amounts of suspended sediment all year as construction continued on the Isabella Ponds new enlarged dam and wetlands. After February the measure of suspended sediment never dropped below **100** Nephelometric Turbidity Units (NTU) and got as high as **310** NTU in June. For context, the maximum amount of sediment runoff 'allowable' under building regulations is 60 NTU. Other water quality issues were experienced last year as a direct result of surrounding construction works. These included an 'oily film' on the water in January, extremely acidic water (pH of 4) in February, alarmingly low oxygen levels in April and a big spike in aquatic nutrient loads in

October. Strangely in spite of these inhospitable conditions at least 50 carp were seen spawning in the extremely low muddy water and there was a confirmed sighting (with

photos) of a platypus in this section by construction workers in December. Desperate times indeed for many species.

The main part of Lake Tuggeranong, by contrast, remained clear of muddy water for most of the year apart from when the 'wetlands' were drained in February pushing a lot of sediment downstream carrying tons of nutrients, with it. The clarity, though picturesque, was a result of not enough inflow coming in to flush the hidden nutrients out of the lake.



The creek below the dam revealed the lake's inability to absorb the large amount of nutrients released with the sediment from the various works upstream. Nutrients, mainly nitrates and phosphorus, found their way through the dam's base flow pipe at levels that have been not been seen since 2014. Right: Main lake body in March (G Patulny)



Left: Thick blue green algae on lake shore (G Patulny)

This showed a lake system on the verge of becoming eutrophic (overloaded with nutrients). The perfect storm for a cyanobacteria (blue- green algae) bloom occurred when this combined with a long hot dry summer, raising surface water temperatures. This gives rise to 'stratification' (a warm layer of water floating over a cooler layer) in the lake that encourages cyanobacteria to float to the surface to grow and divide. Their ability to regulate their position in the water column and to fix atmospheric nitrogen gives them a competitive advantage over other algae in phosphorus rich waters. The lack of mixing of the lake waters through low inflows will have exacerbated the conditions for a bloom. Lack of water movement through 'regulation structures' (i.e. dams) is

considered as much a contributor to blue-green algal blooms as is nutrient load. BTW the milky-blue dye seen on the water surface this year is a result of the 'lysis' (breaking apart) cyanobacteria cells releasing the chlorophyll from their chloroplasts.

A huge thank you to Jeni Delandre, Ben Bryant, Peter Horniak and the students from Lake Tuggeranong College for keeping an eye on the lake last year and sending through timely data in the lead up to this 'event'. 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

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

