

IMPORTANT DATES

A calendar has been included on our new website.

For information on member group workparties for summer go to <https://sactcg.org.au/coming-events/> to see the full listing of what member groups are doing.

Please contact us if dates are wrong or you would like to add events.

24 Dec– 2 Jan - SACTCG Office shutdown

12 Jan - MOAD UPrising day SACTCG will have a stall focused on wetlands and waterways



SOUTHERN NEWS

DECEMBER 2019

From the Office

As we end another busy year, we would like to thank all of the volunteers who continue to do an amazing job looking after our local environment.

We have 2 new faces in the office. Correa Driscoll is our communications officer. Correa has an environmental science degree and is a dedicated volunteer and award winner in youth climate action campaigns. Hannah Edwards is our new Urban Water Education Officer, working on fostering stewardship around the new wetlands built by the ACT Government Healthy Waterways project. She has a background in Environmental Engineering and sustainability education. She's also running water education events.

Fiona and Martine have been busy writing lots of grants. This includes 9 TCCS Adopt a park grants were short listed are currently in a co-planning phase and will be finalised soon.

Martine has also submitted a Smart Farms Grant and 13 small Community Environment Grants (9 likely to be successful) to the Commonwealth. These are slowly trickling in. They will include a 'Landcare for Millennials' project which we hope will give us small teams of young people that will get out to our member groups to help with works.

Unfortunately, we had to postpone the Christmas party, but we will hold a New Year party sometime in February when everyone is back on.

We wish everyone a great Christmas and a safe and prosperous 2020.

SACTCG AGM

The AGM was held on the 25th November at Tuggeranong Homestead.

Miranda has stood down as the chair after 2 years and Glenys has taken up the position.

We are all tremendously grateful for all of the hard work that the committee, especially Miranda, has put in over a difficult 2 years.

The new committee are

Chair – Glenys Patulny

Deputy chair – Kerry Olsson

Treasurer – Philip Prentice

Secretary – Miranda Gardner

Committee member - Kathy Eyles

Public officer – Miranda Gardner

SACTCG Communication

We now have a [SACTCG Facebook](#) page, and are revamping our [website](#). Check them out!

Our website is also for you our members and provides a profile of your group, activities and projects. Please give Correa a call in the office on Thursdays to update any material. Or email her on:

communications@sactcg.org.au

Healthy Waterways Update

We have kicked off our Healthy Waterways project with two walks and talks on the engineered system of wetlands and raingardens at Isabella Pond and Upper Stranger Pond. Local residents enjoyed a talk from Hannah about how the wetland and raingardens are working to improve water quality. Residents were also excited to learn about the Natural Temperate Grassland site which sits next to Isabella Pond. It was a glorious day and it was fantastic to see eager locals wanting to know more about their Healthy Waterways sites. Both of these sites were part of the ACT Governments Healthy Waterways Infrastructure project.

We are supporting the formation of groups at both of these sites. If you are interested in joining please contact Hannah on urbanwater@sactcg.org.au.

We will be running further events at Kambah shops pond, Gowrie raingarden and Wanniasa raingarden in the new year. More details to come.



SatuSteam Weeder

SACTCG have taken delivery of our new Steam Weeder and held a workshop for volunteers on how it works at Cuppacumbalong.

The day turned quite treacherous with scary high winds and storm warnings. Undeterred by the weather about 15 farmers and volunteers braved the conditions. Eventually the winds died down and we turned on the machine to demonstrate how it works. Thankyou to those who came out in rather questionable weather conditions.

This system works in a different way to a chemical sprayer. It kills weeds using super-heated water, not steam as the name suggests. We are currently trialling it on rural properties in Paddy's river and this will provide more info on water usage, effectiveness of a range of annuals and young perennials. We will also assess the most effective way to treat weeds. In time we hope to get it out to groups on reserve lands around the ACT and are looking at trialling it on urban open space in the future.



ACT Landcare Awards



The 2019 ACT Landcare Winners projects were announced this month at the Landcare ACT Awards at the historic 'Lambrigg' property beside the Murrumbidgee River, where community Landcarers from across the Territory came together to celebrate their impressive achievements.

The awards celebrate the incredible efforts of individuals and groups, young and old, to protect the ACT's natural resources, stewarding a more resilient landscape for the future. The award winners and their projects are diverse, from farming and indigenous land management, to educational and mapping tools

Dr Maxine Cooper Landcare ACT Board Chair and MC for the event, thanked the award sponsors and paid tribute to the award finalists and winners as champions of the Landcare community.

'Sunday afternoon's Landcare ACT Awards event was a great celebration of the breadth of Landcare volunteering in the Territory. The awards recognise individuals, groups and partnerships, importantly including First Nations custodians caring for country,' Dr Cooper said.

'On behalf of the ACT's Landcare community I congratulate all the finalists and winners in the award categories. We are seeing real and substantial outcomes from the dedication and commitment of community landcarers. It is so important that we continue to support and recognise their tremendous efforts.'

Winners in National Award categories will represent the ACT at the National Landcare Awards in Sydney in 2020.

Winners were

- Australian Government Individual Landcarer Award - Rainer Rehwinkel
- Australian Government Partnerships for Landcare Award – ParkCare Initiative
- Australian Government Landcare Farming Award - Matthew and Sharon Gregory
- Indigenous Land Management Award - Jackson Taylor-Grant
- Woolworths Junior Landcare Team Award - ACT Young Rangers Club
- Australian Government Innovation in Agriculture Land Management Award - John Lilleyman
- Austcover Young Landcare Leadership Award - Dhani Gilbert
- Australian Community Media Landcare Community Group Award - Red Hill Bush Regenerators
- ACT Local Hero Award – Lyn Jenkins
- ACT Government Citizen Science Award - NatureMapr Aaron Clausen

SACTCG were highly commended in the Community Group Award and the Frogwatch Climate Change Bioindicators Project was highly commended for the Citizen Science award.



Climate Classroom Rally



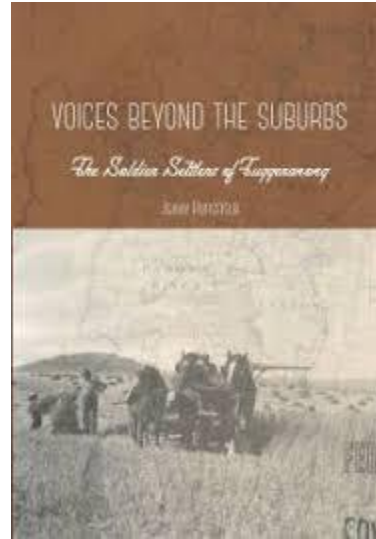
Martine and Correa from SACTCG took part in a Climate Classroom on the 28 November, as part of the Climate Classroom Rally. Maxine Cooper (LACT), Karissa Preuss (GCG) and Janelle Dennis (MCG) joined Martine on a panel about Landcare in the ACT and its importance as a local solution to climate change. Keep your eyes out for the full video of the panel discussion soon!

This was a community forum for anyone interested to learn about and discuss the climate crisis in protest of the government's inaction and to remind them what real democracy looks like.

The aim of the action was to show the Australian Parliament what real democracy looks like; teaching each other about the climate crisis and working together to address it as an inclusive community.



Voices Beyond the Suburbs: The Soldier Settlers of Tuggeranong



Known to many of us, Jenny Horsfield has recently launched her new book, 'Voices Beyond the Suburbs: The Soldier Settlers of Tuggeranong'

As the title says, it is about returning soldiers who took up parcels of land in the "Tuggeranong Valley (on what was Cunningham family land) during the Depression years.

This book gives an emotional insight into the challenges facing farmers in the early years of the National Capital.

Jenny gave a talk about it at the recent AGM, which was enjoyed by all.

Holder Wetlands Open Day

While this was a while ago you may not have heard of the SACTCG Open day at the new wetlands at Holder.

This is one of the newly built Healthy Water project sites. 200 locals braved the arctic conditions of the day to learn more about their new neighbour. Ralf Ogden (EPSDD) took a walk around explaining to people how the wetland is built and how it will improve water flow and biodiversity pockets. Frogwatches Anke Maria also gave a few workshops about frogs and how wetlands were important frog habitat.

H2OK also discussed how we can help keep out waterways clean by reducing what goes into the stormwater.

Many people were keen to join the newly established wetland landcare group. Six politicians also turned out to celebrate 30 years of celebration at the event including Minister Gentleman and federal members.

Thank you for ACT Wildlife for putting on the BBQ, and Sly Fox for the well needed hot coffee!



MCG, GCG and SACTCG, as long-established integral partners of many ParkCare groups, also had displays on the day.



Peter Mills, Leon Horsnell, Michael Mulvaney, Tony Brownlee. Photo: Kathy Eyles

ParkCare Forum

The 30th anniversary of the ParkCare Program was held on 9th November at the Yarramundi Reach gallery.

About 50 volunteers attended and listened to the history of ParkCare from our own Kathy Eyles, Wendy Rainbird, along with Peter Mills (ex C NP Ranger) and Tony Brownlee (ex CNP Manager).

Kathy and other long-term volunteers set up a ParkCare Museum of old maps, new articles, boots, and well used clothes, photos and other things of interest.

Tony gave a rather interesting talk about the fight to get ParkCare up and running and the concerns that the unions and management had about allowing the community to work in the reserves.

Peter added about just how valuable it was to have volunteers working alongside staff in combating weeds across Canberra, in particular species such as pyracanthas, cotoneaster, and hawthorn back in the day. He claimed that the work could not have been achieved at all purely by staff.



Photo: Kathy Eyles

Southfest

SACTCG attended Southfest again this year with a stall in the Community Hub. This is the second year it has been held within the town centre precinct, and an impressive 20,000 people attended.

Staff spoke to many people interested in how to get involved in Landcare in Tuggeranong, as well as people who were just keen to understand more about how the community is involved. The new wetlands projects and the Lake were hot topics, with many people asking how raingardens worked.



RMIT Pesticide Detectives Project

Waterwatch is taking part in the national assessment of pesticides in waters led by the RMIT University.

Waterwatch coordinators are sampling sediments in creeks in urban, rural and natural settings. For more details of this citizen science project, see:

<https://www.rmit.edu.au/research/research-institutes-centres-and-groups/research-groups/aquest/pesticide-detectives>

New Species Discovered at the Bush blitz in the ACT

Focusing on the remote parts of Namadgi National Park via helicopter, Bush blitz surveys and collections have allowed knowledge gaps to be filled, important materials for future genetic and taxonomic studies to be collected, the known ranges of species to be extended, and several new species to be discovered. Find more details at: <https://www.earthwatch.org.au/blog/new-species-discovered-on-bush-blitz-act?>

KPMG Volunteering for SACTCG

On the 25th September 40 staff from KPMG helped TLC and SACTCG clean up Lake Tuggeranong. Others helped weeding at Red Hill, and erosion control at Mt Taylor.

This activity was part of a global day of environmental action by the company.

A very successful day was had by all and we look forward to working with the again next year.



MEMBER GROUP HAPPENINGS

Griffith Woodlands Volunteer Group

We are pleased to report that the Griffith Woodland project continues to prosper, with all your valuable support. The April 2019 plantings (320 forbs and grasses) have not only survived their first months but are thriving! Some species (*Leucochrysum albicans* or Hoary sunray and *Bulbine bulbosa* or Bulbine Lily) have flowered already, and most plants are growing steadily. The lack of predators, timely rains and easy access for watering have contributed to the high survival rate of our plants. Possums (we think) nibbled a few bulbine lilies, but the plants seem to have survived. Thanks to those who have watered when necessary – this will continue to be necessary over the dry summer to come. Alex and Libby did a '4 months in' census in late August and found a 95% survival rate. They will continue to do routine surveys to track survival rates.

The second round of planting is now underway. Continuing the planting plan created by Barbara Payne, landscape architect, we are developing further an important feature of grassy woodland, namely sparse shrub thickets. These provide cover for birds and food for insects.



Photo: Libby McCutchan

In a stroke of pure lepidopteran stage presence and womanly drive to be noticed, Alex and Libby had their first sighting of the endangered Golden Sun Moth on the

reserve this month. A female moth literally wandered into the middle of an onsite meeting with

TCCS and SACTCG staff, so she really chose her moment well.

The Golden Sun Moth (*Synemon plana*) was declared an endangered species in the ACT in 1996 and has special protection status. It is listed as critically endangered nationally, endangered in NSW and threatened in Victoria, so is a very special find on our woodland. Please read more about these fascinating moths in the fact sheet attached and look out for them between 10 and 2 on hot still days in November and December! The females wander around on the ground between wallaby grass tussocks and 'display' to males flying 1m overhead, and then lay eggs in the tussocks. The larvae live underground for several years before emerging for their 4-day life above ground.



Photo: Libby McCutchan

Libby

Coolleman Ridge ParkCare

The Cunningham's Skink (*Egernia cunninghami*) is a sun-loving variety of spiny-tailed skink. It is named in honour of Alan Cunningham; explorer and botanist, who collected the first specimen.



Cunningham Skink Photo: John Hurrell

Its snout to vent length is 250mm. It has a long tail with keeled scales along its dorsal surface from the back of the neck down to the tip of the pointed tail. The legs are quite short, requiring it to slide on its belly when moving around. Its colour can vary from dark brown and reddish to jet black with scattered patches of paler scales. It feeds on a variety of invertebrates such as insects, snails and slugs as well as vegetation such as fruit and leaves.



Cunningham's Skinks Photo: Jenny Horsfield

They live in large social groups making it easier to spot danger. When threatened they take cover in hollow logs, under bark or between rocks. If harassed further they will inhale air, swelling their bodies - this increased size, combined with the spiky keeled scales, makes it difficult for predators to dislodge them.

Source: Australian Museum

SACTCG WATERWATCH: WINTER 2019

From the Coordinator's desk

Waterwatch data now sits on the 'BioCollect' site and can be viewed at <https://biocollect.ala.org.au/actwaterwatch>

Data is now being 'released' (verified) by coordinators, who also have many months of waterbus and habitat assessments to upload. The rush is on to have all this ready so that we can start work on the 2019 Catchment Health Indicator program report. A change in funding from July has also meant an explosion in education activity by Upper Murrumbidgee Waterwatch as we were granted an extra day a week for to deliver exciting programs to schools.

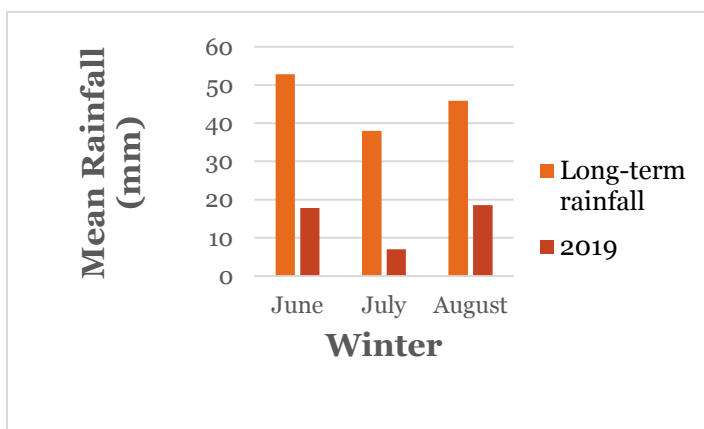
Winter was also platypus and rakali (water rat) survey season and a surge in interest saw many volunteers turning up to the SACTCG survey sites on the Murrumbidgee river at Point Hut Crossing.

Teams update

Welcoming aboard new members this winter includes;

- Kate Rhook from Icon Water, monitoring the Cotter river under the bridge near the popular avenue
- Catherin Gray taking on the Lower Tuggeranong creek.

Around the waterways



Rainfall statistics courtesy of Bureau of Meteorology



Warning Sign at Murray's corner in August.

The catchment continues to show signs of stress from the drought. Most waterbodies are low or completely dry. Warm, low flows have resulted in algae build up in places.

- The **Murrumbidgee River** was low but clear for most of winter apart from a build-up of 'algal sludge' at the upstream end near Tharwa by the end of August.
- The **Cotter River** was clear both above and below the Cotter Dam with algae build up also occurring as a result of low flows.
- **Paddy's River** in contrast had comparatively good flows until August. There was however a bacteria warning sign up again at Murray's Corner (see below).
- **Naas River** catchment was dry until the end of winter.
- **Gudgenby river** was low and clear, but still just flowing.
- **Tidbinbilla Reserve** mostly had low clear water in the upper parts of the Tidbinbilla river, but it all disappeared under the sandy riverbed by the time it got to the stretch near Shanahan's property. The sanctuary wetlands were extremely low.

- **Corin Forest** creek were low, but still flowing and clear.
- **Namadgi National Park** has a trickle in the lower ends of upland bogs and some tributaries, but it was either very murky or full of algae. The large bog area of Hospital Creek had no surface water at all.
- The sediment **Lake Tuggeranong's** wetland began to settle by August, but nutrients slowly built up in the main lake.
- **Point Hut Pond, Conder Wetlands and Stranger Pond** remained low but clear.
- **Westwood farm's** dam became exponentially more turbid as it continued to dry out
- **Cooleman Ridge dams** are still empty.



Wombat hole in the Old Dam Photo: Rob Lundie



Westwood Farm dam just before winter

Platypus Month

This year's Platypus Survey in August had the highest volunteer attendance ever for the SACTCG. Over 15 folk of various ages and backgrounds braved the cold over 4 sessions at Point Hut Crossing on the Murrumbidgee River to formally record at least 3 platypus and 2 rakali. Included was a small team from Lake Tuggeranong College and their intrepid teacher Scott.



Water Education

Highlights this season include **Simon Lawrence** from the **Brindabella Venturers** receiving his Queen Scout Medal through his engagement with the Waterwatch Program. The Year 9 cohort from **Trinity Christian School** also enjoyed a 'Would **I** drink that?' WW Incursion for National Science Week. (It turned out the water with the bugs was the best choice!) Our Waterwatch Program had the wonderful assistance from the Ginninderra WW Coordinator, Bruno Ferronato. Between the 2 organisations Waterwatch/Catchment Group stall was set up at the annual Marist College 'Service day Expo'.



Trinity Christian School Yr9 students



Marist College Service Expo 2019 (see if you can spot Bruno and Martin)



Simon Lawrence; Brindabella Venturer

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>.



SAFETY ALERT

Number: 05/2019

Issued: 19 November 2019

Heat Stress

Description of issue

The ACT is expecting to experience high temperatures. Forecasts from the Bureau of Meteorology for the ACT is predicting 37 degrees on Thursday, with mostly sunny conditions. The sudden change in conditions has the potential to increase the risk of heat related health effects.

Safety considerations

TCCS managers should, if they have not already done so, implement extreme heat protocols, including:

- reorganising outdoor work for cooler times of the day (generally before 10 am and after 4 pm);
- avoiding working near reflective surfaces such as water, cement or metal;
- rotating work so each worker spends less time on heavier tasks;
- working and taking breaks in a shaded area, where possible;
- reinforcing the wearing sun protective clothing, sunscreen and sunglasses;
- promoting drinking plenty of water;
- reminding workers about the dangers of working in extreme heat, recognising heat stress (signs of heat stress include heavy sweating, tiredness, irritability, thirst, inattention and muscular cramps); and
- taking immediate steps if a worker is suffering from heat stress and providing first aid if a person experiences more severe symptoms of heat exhaustion or heat stroke.

More information is available from Worksafe ACT at

https://www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au/app/answers/detail/a_id/3555#!tabs-24

Actions required

1. Provide TCCS outdoor workers with a copy of this safety alert;
2. Implement extreme heat protocols for outdoor workers until temperatures moderate;
3. Remind all workers to take precautions against heat stress; and
4. Advise workers who engage with customers to be aware of people who may be at greater risk of experiencing heat stress.

SAFETY ALERT RELEASE INFORMATION

Released with the authority of Anthony Wickens – Executive Branch Manager Safety and Wellbeing.

Additional information can be obtained via the Safety and Wellbeing team on TCCS.Safety@act.gov.au or 6207 9059.



ACT
Government

Transport Canberra
and City Services

SAFETY ALERT

Number 04/2019

Issued 23 October 2019

SNAKE SAFETY

Description of issue

Living and working in the 'bush capital' has many advantages, including ready access to natural environments. Being the 'bush capital' the ACT has an abundance of wildlife, including snakes. As the weather warms up, you may encounter snakes whilst undertaking your work. The ACT has eight snake species, with five of them potentially harmful to humans. Thankfully snakes are shy and nonaggressive animals that will avoid a confrontation with humans where possible. Whilst the vast majority of encounters between snakes and people don't result in harm (to either party), there are risks of injury resulting from snake bite. This safety alert can assist you to identify and manage the risks.

Where might I encounter a snake during my work?

- Snakes can be found in a range of environments, wherever they can access their key survival requirements of food, shelter and water.
- Snakes are more likely to be found in areas with long grass or sheds or other structures that provide shelter.
- Rodents/frogs are an attractive food source for snakes, so snakes are more likely in areas with rodents or frogs.
- Snakes may be found warming themselves in the sun on paths or rocks.
- Snakes are adaptable animals that can live comfortably in many environments - be aware of the potential for snakes in most areas during the warmer weather!

How to manage the environment to deter snakes

- Where you have control of the environment (ACT Government owned or managed sites) you can make the work area less attractive to snakes by:
 - Keeping grass cut short
 - Removing or minimising rubbish lying around which may provide shelter for snakes
 - Removing unnecessary water sources which may attract snakes
 - Controlling pests such as rodents.
- Where you don't control the environment consider raising snake control as a matter for discussion with the landlord or person who does have control of the work environment.

How should I prepare?

- Consider the risk of snake encounters when planning your work and identify appropriate controls. Special consideration should be given to new or inexperienced staff, or new work tasks. Avoid working alone if practical.
- Ensure you carry appropriate first aid equipment when performing work outdoors and in all work vehicles. The first aid kit must include a wide compression bandage and splint as a

Biosecurity alert

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.



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Contact Us

Southern ACT Catchment Group Inc
Unit C8 Erindale Business Park
2 Lansell Circuit Wanniasa ACT 2903

Office: 62966400

Martine: info@sactcg.org.au

Fiona: projects@sactcg.org.au

Martin: waterwatch@sactcg.org.au

Hannah: urbanwater@sactcg.org.au

Correa: communications@sactcg.org.au

www.sactcg.org.au

Facebook page: [SACTCG](#)

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