

## IMPORTANT DATES

A calendar has been included on our website.

For information on member group work parties 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.



♥ Joan ♥

# SOUTHERN NEWS

JUNE 2020

## FROM THE OFFICE

Hi all. We hope you are all well and slowly starting to emerge from the forced hibernation. We know it's been a tough time for many, so we are really pleased that ParkCare, Landcare and Waterwatch activities have resumed, allowing our valuable volunteers to stay active and care for our local environment.

The office has mostly returned to normal with staff coming in and out whilst ensuring appropriate distancing. We continue to use Zoom for larger meetings. You are welcome to come in to see us but we ask that you please make an appointment to ensure someone is here.

Whilst we have received extensions for many projects that require group gatherings we are progressing many activities in the catchment and have been busily submitting grants with and for members. We are excited to have received a Commonwealth grant to build a Women in farming network over the next year. We remain focused on assisting recovery in Namadgi and are working on designing projects and getting funding to get the community engaged so stay tuned!

On a very sad note, one of local environmental hero's, Joan Goodrum, passed away this week. Joan was a tireless champion for the environment and for the Aboriginal history and culture of the region particularly Namadgi National Park. For many years she served the SACTCG committee, Minders Tuggeranong Homestead and Friends of Tidbinbilla and was a valuable source of knowledge and passion for our community. She will be greatly missed. We will keep members informed when we know about the details for her memorial service.

As always, I'm up for a chat with members and partners so please feel free to give me a call as needed.

Martine (Executive Officer)

## EASING OF COVID 19 RESTRICTIONS

Both the ParkCare program and the TCCS urban program have eased restrictions in line with the ACT Government recommendations to allow volunteers to get back to work.

Advice is in line with the ACT Health Directorate,

So, with that in mind please:

- Keep events to no more than 10 people,
- Keep social distancing and maintain 1.5 meters away from other participants at any activity,
- Maintain good hand hygiene and wash your hands before and after the activity,
- Stay at home if you are feeling unwell,

As the advice of the health directorate changes, we will endeavor to keep you updated. For those who want to know more visit - <https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/>

## WALK FOR NAMADGI FUNDRAISER

I think we would all agree that the Orroral Valley fire in Jan/Feb feels like a lifetime away. It was such a huge and devastating event, and it's been sad that due to COVID-19 and continued bushfire damage we haven't been able to get in to Namadgi to help with recovery. The "Walk for Namadgi" fundraiser started as the brainchild of a lovely Canberran, Emma, who contacted us about setting up a sponsored walk for Namadgi to get people active, engaged, connected and feeling like they were contributing to Namadgi recovery at the same time! The rest is history. Over the month of May 'Walk for Namadgi' had 36 participants who walked 2709 kms and raised \$6796 which is incredible! Each participant set themselves a goal of kilometres to walk/run and friends and family donated generously. It was a lot of fun with the best fundraiser being 5 year old Tom who raised over \$900 himself. The money will go to the Southern ACT Catchment Environment Fund and be used specifically for the coordination and/or resourcing of volunteer activities in Namadgi National Park.

We are currently working with our Peak Body Landcare ACT to plan activities for our Namadgi volunteers for when

we are allowed in to do a range of restoration work. We'll keep you posted.

## BROCHURES

Correa (our Communications Officer) is making progress with the SACTCG brochures. A new SACTCG Brochure will be complete soon and has a fold out map including member groups. Brochures for member groups on TCCS land will also be created soon. The new member brochures will have a similar look and feel to the SACTCG brochure. If you haven't got in touch yet, and are interested in having a new brochure designed and printed for your group, please contact Correa at [communications@sactcg.org.au](mailto:communications@sactcg.org.au). If you have already expressed interest in this, she will be in contact with you in the coming weeks.

## FACEBOOK

We've been increasing our Facebook following- if you haven't liked our page, get on it! @SACTCG

## LANDCARE FOR MILLENNIALS

Due to the COVID shutdown, the Landcare for Millennials project has been on hold, but we hope to have more information out soon! If you know any young people interested in Landcare, let them know! If your group could use some extra hands for a working bee (especially young and enthusiastic ones), get in touch with Correa at [communications@sactcg.org.au](mailto:communications@sactcg.org.au).

## WOODLAND AND WILDLIFE MONITORING

We are due to start two citizen science projects in our local reserves. One will monitor wildlife using small cameras and the other will take aerial imagery of restorations works in the south to monitoring ecological condition (with a new drone!). Both will be working with our member groups in the areas they work. If you haven't yet, get in touch with Correa at [communications@sactcg.org.au](mailto:communications@sactcg.org.au) if this interests you and your volunteer work.

## STEAM WEEDER

Coming to a reserve or park near you!

We are currently working on the approvals for our Steam weeder trailer to be used on PCS and TCCS land. Soon it will be full steam ahead for groups to be able utilise this machine to treat and control various weeds. We have two grants to trial this innovative chemical free weed treatment across southern ACT, if you are interested contact Hannah at [urbanwater@sactcg.org.au](mailto:urbanwater@sactcg.org.au)

## NATURE IN OUR CITY INQUIRY REPORT

The report for the Nature in Our City Inquiry has been released - available on the Environment and Transport and City Services Committee's website, [here](#).

## HEALTHY WATERWAYS UPDATE



### Q and A's with water smart gardens in Canberra

Here is the second instalment of our ongoing column in our newsletter sharing stories, tips, and photos from waterwise gardens around Canberra. We know one of the best ways to help improve the quality of water in our urban waterways is to keep as much rain on your block as possible. We hope these profiles can provide some inspiration for how we can all do that easily, cheaply and have a magnificent garden at the same time. We were so impressed with Ren's community approach to his garden by sharing with the neighbourhood by taking in food scraps and creating herb gardens to share.



### Ren Webb, Waramanga.

*Could you tell us a little bit about your house and garden?*

We have a 3-bedroom 1970's brick veneer home on 575m2. We have planted over 40 fruit trees as well as table grapes, kiwis, passionfruit, and berries, and have converted large areas of lawn to vegetable gardens. We also keep laying hens, and periodically take in young roosters that we raise for the table. The garden is being developed on permaculture principles and is focused on food production.

We have a worm farm, two wicking beds, a composting toilet, and a dust bin by the letterbox for neighbours to drop off their food scraps. One wicking bed is against the footpath for passers-by to help themselves to herbs and greens.

*How long have you been working on your garden?*

We bought our house in mid-2016 and have been working on the energy efficiency of the house and the garden since then.

*Why did you apply for a H2OK grant?*

We applied for a H2OK grant to help us fund further developing our water management systems and to then have a platform to showcase what we have done to others.

*What did you use the H2OK grant for?*

The bulk of the grant was spent on purchasing a 5000L slimline water tank. We also bought Lucerne hay to mulch the garden, drip irrigation lines and fittings and a chicken tractor. The grant and subsequent garden tours motivated us to put more time and effort into developing the garden.

*What is your favourite part of your garden?*

I built a deck and installed a door on the western side the house and have grown a crimson seedless grape over the pergola to provide seasonal shade. This vine produces hundreds of bunches of grapes each summer, and deck provides a great view over the garden. We put a nesting box in the large gum tree, and a bird bath underneath it, so have lots of bird activity to observe while relaxing on the deck. The autumn colour of the persimmon tree is particularly spectacular at this time of year.

Read the full interview [here](#).



### Water Letters from Emma at Gowrie Primary School

Hannah, (our Urban Water Education Officer), presented to the Grade 3s at Holy Family Primary School for their term 1 unit of water. These curious kids had been exploring water in their local environment with the Gowrie Raingarden just down the road. She was blown away by their enthusiasm with some budding scientists asking some very tricky questions. Their fantastic teacher, Emma, has emailed through some letters that the grade 3s have written about their questions around water. You can read the letters [here](#).



### All the leaves have fallen...

Whilst deciduous trees may bring us much pleasure in watching the seasons change, they can cause havoc on our urban waterways. Leaves contain organic material and nutrients which contribute to polluting our waterways and can cause problems in many months' time when we see the lakes turn blue green with algae!

We can all help reducing the amount of leaves ending up in our waterways by sweeping up the leaves on your nature strip and placing them in your compost or green bin.

## MEMBER GROUP HAPPENINGS

### Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group

Like other ParkCare, 2020 has been a very difficult time for the Gudgenby Bushies. As well as the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, the aftermath of the Orroral fire in Namadgi National Park and the park's closure has meant no work parties have been held since last December.

Fortunately, several of our members have been able to access certain parts of the regen area in the past few months as part of approved inspections or other visits. As anticipated, it is apparent the fire has had a severe impact on the bulk of the area. While fire intensity was variable, many younger trees which were the result of our efforts were badly affected and the heavy rain that followed the fire has resulted in widespread erosion. Nevertheless, regeneration of affected trees from the ground level was evident and, as a bonus, no pine trees were seen! And of course, the magnificent efforts of park and emergency services staff in saving heritage sites such as Gudgenby cottage in the vicinity of the regen area is something we can all take great heart from.



Our work parties will remain suspended until park staff have been able to complete the massive task of repairing infrastructure and ensuring the park is safe for both the visiting public and volunteers. We're hopeful of resuming in spring, in time for an expected flush of woody weeds and exotic grasses to tackle.

A positive of the enforced shutdown is that we've been able to complete a review of the written and photographic material accumulated since our establishment as an incorporated body in 1998. As a result, a consolidated set of meeting records, reports, photographs and other material will be deposited with the ACT Heritage Library once it reopens to the public. It's good to know that our history will have a secured home!

Doug Brown  
President

#### Urambi Hills

Now that ParkCare groups can restart our activities, Urambi Hills Group will be planting out shrubs and dealing with African love grass in worm lizard habitat in upcoming work parties.

BYO bucket to water and mulch.

We meet on the last Sunday of the month, 9-12 at the Meredith Cct entrance to Urambi Hills nature park and would love to see some new faces!

Find us on Facebook Urambi Hills Group or email [urambihillsgroup@gmail.com](mailto:urambihillsgroup@gmail.com)

A casualty of COVID-19 is the morning tea, so please BYO refreshments.

Louise

#### Mount Taylor ParkCare Group

We hope you have been able to enjoy nature while we have been in lock-down - with the easing of some restrictions, Parks has advised we can return to work in nature reserves subject to new guidelines limiting volunteers to groups of 10, observing social distancing and hygiene rules.

The area around the new plantings and iron sculpture at the start of the southern walking trail needs a good weed and tidy up – so on May 31 meet Anne at the Manheim gate carpark at 2pm or at the work site (just up the Mannheim gate fire trail from the water cube). The next workparty will be the 28<sup>th</sup> June, contact Kathy for meeting details.

We will have hand sanitiser and either bring your own gloves or we will provide a pair for you to hang onto. Byo drinking water and mug for arvo tea and wear sturdy shoes.

In exciting news for Mt Taylor, Peter Ramshaw has found another new orchid species 'little dumpies' *Diplodium truncatum*.



Photo: Peter Ramshaw

Stay safe and well - any questions about the meet call Kathy 0407 899 698

Kathy Eyles

#### Farrer Ridge ParkCare Group

Due to the restrictions, Farrer Ridge ParkCare group have been going for walks, and check out what was there!

Hence the photos instead of an article.



Welcome from some residents!



Some colour, Hibbertia



Echidna on Farrer Ridge Nature Reserve. The Verbascum rosette was removed later!



Chrysocephalum

Wendy Rainbird

#### Coolleman Ridge ParkCare Group

It's an ill wind ...! There has been a huge increase in the number of walkers and cyclists on the Ridge since the COVID-19 lockdown began in March.

People, many of whom have never visited the Ridge, have been enjoying the beautiful Autumn weather, the verdant state of the Ridge following welcome rain, and the magnificent views from all parts. Malcolm reported that on one mid-April Sunday, cars were parked all over the place at the Kathner St entrance. He noted that there has been an unusually high call on Ridge pamphlets.

As evidence that many of these people were new to the area, quite a few have been observed taking photos of the Ridge entrance board and availing themselves of the pamphlets. Apparently Kathner St is now advertised on the web as a starting point for walks.

While Chris was doing a spot of informal weeding on the Mt Arawang saddle, he received a lot of interest in his activity. He was able to show people the sort of weeds we target. One group thought he was preparing a veggie patch, and another assumed he was harvesting St John's Wort for medicinal use. Rob enjoyed telling people they can use Verbascum leaves as toilet paper and that they can stockpile as many as they like.

One advantage of so many people using the Ridge is that it gives us an opportunity to explain what we do and point out the weeds we are targeting. Most people have heard



of African Love Grass, but it is much easier to show people the difference between it and other grasses rather than relying on photos which rarely do grasses justice.

Rob

### Friends of Tidbinbilla

We were finally able to get back out and check out our water testing sites! Yayy! The reserve is looking beautiful now after the rain we have enjoyed since February.

The ash from the burnt areas has moved down stream, but the sediment is still moving down from the top of the river.



Our top water testing site still full of sediment and mud.



Mushrooms galore at the moment!

Fiona

### Friends of Hughes Grassy Woodland

SACTCG welcome a new group, the Friends of Hughes Grassy Woodland, who have already removed well over 1000 small(ish) Cootamundra wattles and heaps of soft weeds from section 58, Hughes. There are still more Cootamundra's to remove, many of which are reshoots after they had been cut and dabbed. There are also lots of tiny ones coming up so it will be a long time before we can contemplate being free of it.

The group have been trying to form a photographic record on Canberra Nature Map of every plant species in the reserve. So far, we have added more than 10 extra species to the list Michael Mulvaney noted on our short walk. I'm sure we'll find even more as we keep working.

Kim's work on the soft/spreading weeds had uncovered many *Einandria nutans* (climbing saltbush) and rock fern *Cheilanthes sieberi* seems to be all over the place as are various species of *Wahlenbergia*. We have some areas which are thick with lawn grass and *paspalum* which spraying may help but we are also concerned that underneath many of the weeds are tiny natives.

We've also had problems lately with people dumping garden waste in the area and several people driving in to take timber. This is despite signs which we have put up, thanks to Brian and Allan from TCCS for printing them for us.



SACTCG put in an Environment grant to restore an understorey layer for bird habitat, so fingers crossed!



Swift parrot



Convolvulus augustissimus

Jenny

#### Griffith Woodland Volunteer Group

The group have been chipping away at various weeds across the site and battling to keep their plantings alive during summer.

Currently they are delving into the world of official names, to ask the community their view on a more official name for the Griffith Woodlands reserve.

As summer seems but a distant memory, here are a few photos showing the difference a few months makes.





## SACTCG WATERWATCH: AUTUMN 2020

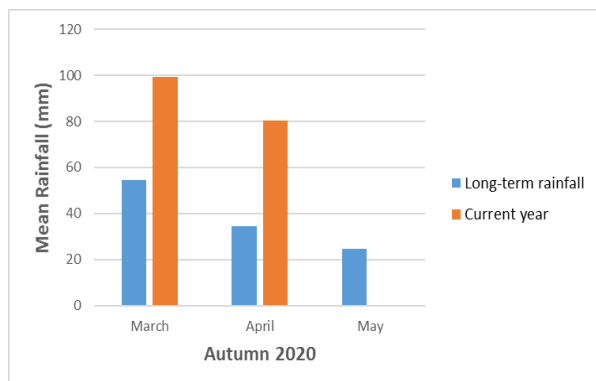
Waterwatch volunteers had been asked not to conduct any monitoring for most of this season due to the COVID-19 social distancing restrictions in place. Any water data that was collected happened during the water bug surveys conducted by the 4 coordinators and Woo O'Reilly, the Regional Facilitator. Access to nature reserves, including Tidbinbilla and Namadgi national park was also restricted in the wake of the summer bushfires. Good news for Waterwatchers is that most waterways now have good flows and levels of water to monitor when they return to their sites in May.

### Teams update:

Welcoming aboard new members this autumn;

- **Vanya Munibi** monitoring the Murrumbidgee river at Tharwa and Kambah Pool
- Rangers **Sally Hatton** and **Tim Wells** covering the Cotter, Paddy's and Murrumbidgee rivers

Also, sad farewells to Ranger Bernie Brown and Carer of Point Hut Ponds volunteer Alan Parker who have both been waterwatching for a number of years.



*Rainfall statistics courtesy of Bureau of Meteorology*

**Autumn Water bugs:** Our rivers received a reviving flush of water as rainfall went above average for the first time in many months. In some, this resulted in flash flooding events that caused significant damage at one crossing. The bush fires in both the ACT and NSW have also affected most of our natural waterways. Streams fed by burnt catchments can become loaded with soot and ash as well as sand from increased erosion as heavy rain hits ground burnt bare. The increase of nutrients in the water inhibit the survival of many water bugs. Sand and ash can cover micro habitats essential for the survival of sensitive insect larvae such as stonefly and flash flooding can whisk away many creatures that have managed to hang on. On a positive note some of our urban water ways provided oasis for many species over summer and the autumn surveys contained pleasant surprises.

### Here is a summary of the season from the bugs point of view:

The **Murrumbidgee river** was 'fair' to 'poor' with fly larvae being the most abundant creatures seen. However, sites with good riffle zones (fast water flowing over rocks) e.g. Uriarra Crossing, hosted good levels of diversity compared to deeper sections of river such as at Pine Island.

The **Cotter river** above the Cotter dam had 'good' scores with plenty of sensitive mayfly and caddisfly larvae along with 2 big 'toe biters' who are also very sensitive to pollution. Below the dam the score was only 'fair' with mostly shrimp and fly larvae in the tray.

At **Paddy's river** Mayfly and caddisfly larvae were abundant in the clear waters but the river achieved only a 'poor' score as the diversity of bugs usually found at Murray's Corner were sadly missing.

The **Naas river** had very little life in spite of having flows for the first time in years. It scored a 'poor' assessment as a result of revealing only 6 bug types. Being dry for so long followed by a large flooding event could be to blame.

The **Gudgenby river** had better diversity than many others but the majority of the bugs were tolerant to pollution such as the fly larvae seen elsewhere. It scored 'fair'.

In **Tidbinbilla Reserve**, a survey of the entire sanctuary to assess platypus food supplies showed only 'fair' to 'degraded' levels of water bugs wherever we looked. The river had low numbers for all of the types seen apart from, once again, fly larvae. The only other bugs found in any abundance were water boatmen, a very pollution tolerant insect.

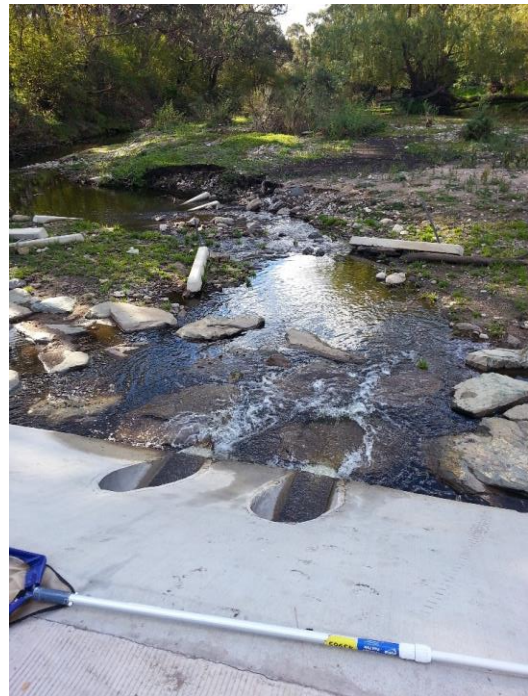
**Lake Tuggeranong's** water way system scored 'good' diversity above and below the lake. The main body only received a 'poor' bug score down to the Town Park Beach driven by extremely low numbers of anything other than water boatman. The pleasant surprise was in the southern 'wetland' section where lots of sensitive caddisfly larvae were seen for the first time in years, along with enough diversity for it to achieve a 'good' score.

**Point Hut Pond** also only receive a 'poor' score. There were many caddisfly larvae but apart from these water boatmen were the only bugs found in any number.

**Stranger Pond** showed itself to be another nice refuge for many species this season. 10 different types of bugs were found, higher than most of our natural water ways. This gave it a 'good' score.

The **Coolleman Ridge** dams have been dry for so long that it was a surprise to find any water life. Surprisingly there were mayfly larvae, water beetles and lots of fly larvae and water boatmen. A few damselfly larvae were also in attendance, but the dam only achieved a 'poor' assessment.

**Namadgi National Park** and **Isabella Pond** are yet to be surveyed at the time of writing.



*Naas River flowing again and Bruno Ferronato from GCG assisting with the water bug count. Note the concrete barriers in the river.*

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](mailto:waterwatch@sactcg.org.au).

## *Volunteer Fieldwork through COVID19- 8/5/2020 update*

# PARKCARE SAFETY GUIDELINES

1

### STAY HOME IF YOU'RE SICK

If you're exhibiting symptoms of COVID19- please stay home to protect fellow volunteers and the public



2

### MAX 10 PEOPLE

Volunteers can work in groups of up to 10 people



3

### PRACTICE SOCIAL DISTANCING

Stay 1.5 m away from other volunteers and members of the public



4

### PRACTICE GOOD HAND HYGEINE

Wash your hands before and after volunteer activities



5

### DON'T SHARE TOOLS OR EQUIPMENT

Volunteers should not share tools or equipment, be responsible for your own gear and clean it regularly



*This information is based on a current risk assessment and information on [COVID19.act.gov.au](https://www.act.gov.au/covid19), volunteers can request PPE or additional tools which will be provided by the ParkCare Ranger.*

## ITS PERSONAL!

Safety is everyone's responsibility, all volunteers should cease volunteer activities if at any time they feel unwell or unsafe.



## CONTACT US

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