

## IMPORTANT DATES

Our XMAS party is on the **10th December** and you're invited! (see invite below)

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.

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# SOUTHERN NEWS

DECEMBER 2020

## FROM THE OFFICE

Hi all,

As we look to the end of 2020, SACTCG is reflecting on what a year of challenges it has been for everyone.

We are looking forward to a well-earned break over summer, and we hope everyone else takes time to catch up with loved ones while we can, in a COVID safe way of course...

We have all been rather busy over the last few months as we get onto projects that were delayed earlier on the year due to COVID 19. Read on to find out more about some of the interesting projects that we have been working on lately and some that will lead us into 2021.

SACTCG also welcomes a new staff member, Chantelle James. Chantelle will be working 2 days a week and will be focussing on our Namadgi Bushfire Recovery project with Landcare ACT and other projects in the new year.

Cheers, Martine (Executive Officer)

## Namadgi Bushfire Recovery Project

SACTCG have partnered with Landcare ACT to undertake a program of volunteer activities as part of the recovery of Namadgi National Park. Along with the amazing crowdfunding SACTCG did with the lovely Emma, we will hopefully offer several activities through to at least June 2021. Activities have been booked out rather quickly, which is great to see.

So far, we have undertaken two days, chipping out weeds and doing a little bit of planting. The first activity was in the area surrounding the Visitors Centre and the dam area out the back. Although not fire effected, this area was quite heavily impacted by the drought. Ranger Nathan was nice enough to show us lots of photos taken during and in the days after the fire, showing the damage as well as the emergency coverings and watering systems that rescued many of the heritage huts throughout the park.



The 2<sup>nd</sup> activity was held at the Glendale Picnic Area, where we cut and dabbed verbascum, briar rose and thistles. With the media present, you may have noticed that we got quite a bit of coverage about our activities including an item on the ABC evening news! (thankyou to the wonderful Jane, Landcare ACTs Communication Officer ☺).

On the day Brett McNamara, Namadgi National Park regional district manager, Karissa Preuss and Maxine Cooper from Landcare ACT, MLA Mick Gentleman and the new Greens MLA Rebecca Vassarotti also joined

us to thank the volunteers for engaging with the recovery effort.

We are currently planning two more days for December, on the 6<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup>, and will be booking in more days for 2021 soon!



### Grass ID workshop for urban open space volunteers

SACTCG ran theory and field-based grass identification workshops, with the lovely Alison Elvin from Natural Capital recently. These workshops are funded through an Adopt A Park Grant for volunteers working in urban parks.





On the 18<sup>th</sup> October Alison helped us look at the landscape holistically and stressed that weeds are not all bad, that some have use in reducing erosion and in some cases protecting native seedlings from the harsh conditions. The workshop ran through different types of grasses, identifying many samples that participants brought in. We learnt about the difference between corkscrew grass (native) and the dreaded needlegrass, and the difference between the native and introduced plantain.

The theory-based workshop was followed up with two field site sessions on the 8<sup>th</sup> November – at Griffith Woodland and the Monash grasslands – so that participants could test out their identification skills. Both sites were beautiful, and Alison was equally amazed by the diversity at each site.

We will be holding more field visits in March to catch summer C4 flowering grasses.



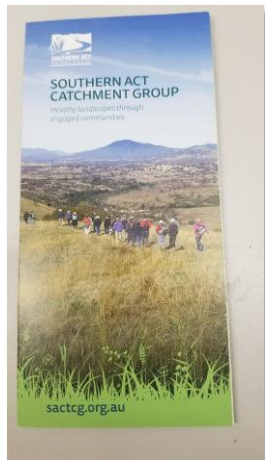
Thank you to the Griffith Woodland group for hosting us at their reserve – it is a little gem in the heart of Griffith.



The Monash Grassland is currently unloved. We would be keen to start a Landcare group there in the future if there is local interest. If you know anyone who may be interested, let us know.

## Brochures

Correa has finished our SACTCG brochure, and it looks amazing! She is now busy working on brochures for member groups working in urban open space, which is part of an Adopt A Park grant. The new member brochures will have a similar look and feel to the SACTCG brochure – stay tuned!



## Facebook

We've been increasing our Facebook following – it's up to 547- if you haven't liked our page, get on it! @SACTCG

## Landcare for Millennials

Landcare for our Future (originally Landcare for Millennials) has been running since September this year funded from a Commonwealth Community Environment Program Grant. The purpose of the program is to get young people involved in Landcare and get to know Landcare groups in their local area- all while helping out Landcare/ParkCare groups with their projects. We've had four events so far- at Tuggeranong Hill, Tuggeranong Homestead, Farrer Ridge and Mount Mugga Mugga- a huge thanks to all these groups for having us along! We have had a range of young people from around Canberra come along to each event- many of them entirely new to Landcare. Together the participants learn about the ParkCare/Landcare group, the reserve, some plant/weed ID and how to tackle some of the worst weeds in the area. Most of the events are run in

conjunction with the ParkCare/Landcare group's regular working bee- to give both the park carers and the new young volunteers a chance to meet and learn from each other. We've been having so much fun and it's wonderful to see so many passionate young people keen to get involved in Landcare. Each event we've run so far has had at least a couple of young people keen to join the group as a regular volunteer. We have completed the total number of events required in the Tuggeranong Area, but next year will continue with 2 more events in the Woden/Weston Creek area and 3 Rural Landcare events. Get in touch if you would like to have some young hands around in your area (Woden/Weston Creek or Rural) for next year.





## Woodland and wildlife monitoring

After some delays, the citizen science projects in our local reserves funded through the Communities Environment Program will be up and running in 2021.

### Bat walk

, Southern ACT Catchment Group has some equipment for monitoring BATS in Canberra! As of yet there is very little data on Microbats or Megabats in Canberra, and researchers at ANU and within ACT Government are keen to get more of an insight into bats in our urban parks and reserves. We have 8 handheld bat detectors (EchoMeters) which use a special microphone to pick up the ultrasonic echolocation calls of microbats - which are undetectable to the human ear. The echometers plug into your smartphone where you can use the EchoMeter App to see any bat calls you pick up in real time!

We will be running several night-time walks over the next few months to see which bats we can find and record the sightings and other data such as location, date and time in Canberra Nature Map.

The first Bat Walk will be held on Tuesday the 15th December at Farrer Ridge, 8pm-9:30pm, meeting at the end of Muresk Street at the ParkCare Sign. We will be joined by "Bat Man" Researcher Michael Pennay to help identify any bats we may discover based on their echolocation calls.

Please bring: a headtorch, sturdy shoes, insect repellent, and your charged smartphone.

Some smartphones are not compatible with the Echometers so we will have some spares at hand (if you want to check if yours is compatible, [click here](#) for android devices, and [click here](#) for Apple/IOS devices. If you don't have a smartphone, you can pair up with someone who does on the night.

RSVP is compulsory- please email Correa at [Communications@sactcg.org.au](mailto:Communications@sactcg.org.au) if you would like to come on the Bat walk!

The bat detectors will also be available for individual loan soon, so you can take them out on an evening that suits you, in your own time and see what's around, and then record what you find. If you are interested in this, please get in touch with Correa at [communications@sactcg.org.au](mailto:communications@sactcg.org.au).



### Aerial Monitoring Project

This project will record aerial images of volunteer restorations works in the South (with a drone!). The drone program will be trialed in Urambi and possibly Mount Taylor. We are still working through the regulations and approvals process for both projects, but we are getting closer to getting these projects up and running. More to come!

## Steam weeder

### Public Demonstration

On Thursday the 19th we took the Steam weeder out to Tharwa Tennis Club for a public demonstration and information session with Weedtechnics' Jeremy Winer. It was a great opportunity for land holders, PCS and urban volunteers to see the trailer in action and learn more about chemical-free weed control. We are currently in the process of trialling the steam weeder throughout Southern ACT. If you or your group would be interested in getting involved please contact Hannah at [urbanwater@sactcg.org.au](mailto:urbanwater@sactcg.org.au)



### **Steam cleaning weeds**

Our steam weeder has been out and about and is killing serrated tussock and small blackberries!



*A treated thistle – broadleaf weeds turn black within 30 minutes after treatment*



*A treated serrated tussock – grasses turn a bright green after treatment*



## Urban Waterways Program

### Urban Water Walk

The Weston Creek Water Walk was run by Photo Access and led by Dr Kristen Wehner. Hannah was invited along as an expert to explain what was explored along the walk which consisted of urban drainage (formerly Weston Creek), engineering water structures and ending at Holder Wetlands. The aim of this half day exploration was to examine the place of urban water through the lens of photography.

A selection of photographs from the day were exhibited at the Photo Access gallery in Fyshwick and can be viewed on the links below.

<http://www.gallery.photoaccess.org.au/water-walks>

Cameron Muir, a writer and journalist, created an essay on his experience on the three walks, it can be found here:

<http://www.gallery.photoaccess.org.au/water-walks-essay>.

Upcoming events Hannah will be assisting include:

- Friends of Curtin rain garden December 5th at 10am
- Holder Wetlands Steam weeder December 13th Trial 9am-11am

### Member Group Happenings

An interesting article from the Cooleman Ridge Parkcare group newsletter below:

I recently noticed that someone had sawn off a low-hanging mistletoe from one of the ancient Red Box (*Eucalyptus polyanthemos*) trees above Lincoln Place. I wondered whether this person knew that, although mistletoe was traditionally thought to kill trees, recent research has found that it is a valuable and fascinating plant. Mistletoe, which is semi-parasitic, has evolved together with its host, and unless the tree is unhealthy, a few mistletoe clumps should not

cause any problems. Mistletoe can manufacture its own food through the chlorophyll in its leaves, but it depends on its host tree for water and physical support.

Mistletoe fruit is usually red and tasty, and with the leaves and nectar, are an excellent food source for birds (especially the beautiful, tiny Mistletoe Bird), possums and caterpillars.

However, in times of drought, mistletoes can have a negative effect on eucalypt trees.



Mistletoe leaves do not have the ability to close their leaf 'pores' like eucalypt trees can. This means that these 'pores' (stomata) remain open and the tree's valuable moisture is lost by evaporation. If the tree is heavily infested with mistletoe this is likely to have a detrimental effect and may be the tipping point to cause decline and possibly death.

Fire, on the other hand, kills the mistletoe because mistletoe does not have epicormic buds like eucalypts, and therefore cannot regrow after fire. An open landscape does not encourage fires in the canopy of these isolated trees, so these trees become more heavily infested with mistletoe.

Did you know that the word mistletoe derives from an old German language – "mistel" meaning dung, and "tan" for a stick!

Apart from mistletoe, there is another semi parasitic plant on Cooleman Ridge. I am referring to the Native Cherry, or *Exocarpus cupressiformis*. This bright green cypress shaped tree uses its roots to parasitise the roots of nearby plants, as well as photosynthesizing its own nutrients.

*Linda Spinaze*

## Friends of Tidbinbilla



*Its wonderful to see water in the Sanctuary dams again, as this time last year many of them were bone dry...*

*Fiona*





As we head into the silly season, let's reflect on the great work we have all achieved in 2020.

Come along and celebrate the end of a challenging year of fire, smoke, Zoom meetings, empty shelves and our ever enduring Landcare work in the south!

SACTCG invite you all to a BBQ on  
Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> December, 5pm - 7pm,  
At the Kambah Village Shops BBQ area,  
Off Primmer Circuit Kambah

Please **RSVP** to Fiona on 62966400 or [projects@sactcg.org.au](mailto:projects@sactcg.org.au) by  
Monday 7th for catering,

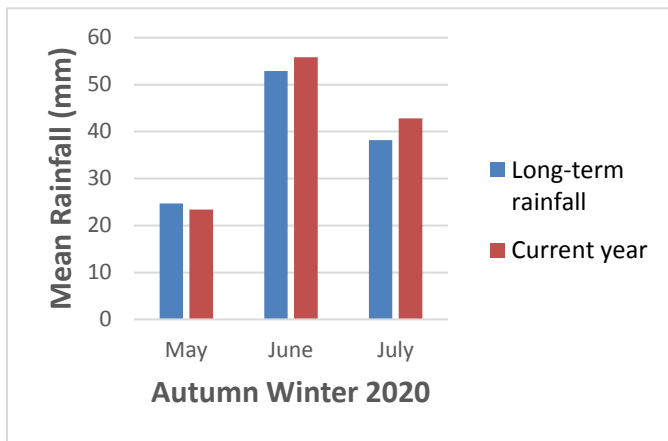
Please let us know if you have any dietary requirements.



SACTCG will provide everything, just bring yourselves



## SACTCG Waterwatch: Winter 2020



*Rainfall statistics courtesy of Bureau of Meteorology*

While it feels like an extremely wet season so far, the statistic from the BOM give a sobering reminder that it has only been just above the long-term average. It seems wet because last year was so dreadfully dry. Waterwatchers returned to their sites with renewed vigour in May even though all remote sites apart from Tidbinbilla were closed. By August Corin Forest and the Naas Valley reopened to the public. Some of Namadgi National Park is still out of bounds due the continued risk posed by a fire damaged habitat.

**Platypus surveys** were conducted in our region by large volunteer teams at Point Hut Crossing and Tidbinbilla sanctuary this month. Two platypus and a rakali were spotted at Point Hut Crossing on the first morning. We also enjoyed the attendance of Minister Mick Gentleman and the news team from WIN who had the pleasure of interviewing a volunteer who had just seen her first platypus in the wild. High, turbulent water rushing through the crossing after the heavy rain in early August have meant no sightings since then. We don't have the results from Tidbinbilla yet, but we know there are at least 5 are there, as they are wearing tracking devices after being returned from Taronga Zoo. They recouped at the zoo over the last months of summer and much of autumn after being rescued for the receding waters of the sanctuary late last year. This links shows them getting a check-up in the Tidbinbilla vet centre before being released back into the sanctuary <https://www.facebook.com/100013000089770/videos/928269367616391/?t=0>

### Teams update:

A busy season of training! Welcome aboard new members this winter;

- **William McNaughton** (Southern stretch of lake Tuggeranong)
- **Canberra Grammar School 'Duke of Edinburgh'** students (Lake Tuggeranong and Point Hut Ponds)
- **Angus Phillips** (Guises Creek)
- **Ross and Jennifer Knee** (Tuggeranong Creek)
- **Ranger Mark Elford** (Upper Cotter River- above Corin Dam!)

**Around the Waterways.** Most of our rivers are showing signs of slowly dissipating ash and debris from the summer fires. That said, fine ash filled sediment is still a feature of the Murrumbidgee banks especially after bouts of heavy rain anywhere in the catchment, including upstream in NSW. Some interesting waterwatch readings over winter included:

- High phosphorus levels in the Tidbinbilla sanctuary.
- Low dissolved oxygen levels found in Isabella Pond
- High (caustic) pH and phosphorus levels in the Fadden and Tuggeranong stormwater system
- Extreme phosphorus levels in the Cooleman Ridge dams.
- High nitrates in Lake Tuggeranong.
- High turbidity (sediment) in Paddy's river in July
- High turbidity in the Murrumbidgee river at Point Hut Crossing.

All of these readings were reported to the relevant ACT Government authorities.

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>.



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