

MEMBER WORKING BEES

For information on member group work parties for winter in Southern ACT go to: <https://sactcg.org.au/coming-events/> to see the full listing of activities.

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



@SACTCG

We now have an amazing 737-followers!

If you would like events shared, let us know.

SOUTHERN NEWS

JULY 2021

FROM THE OFFICE

Hi all,

A lot has happened in 6 months, including the announcement from Minister Vassarotti to provide 4-year funding for the Catchment Groups and Frogwatch, which is AMAZING! We don't know of the details of this as yet, however we would like to thank ACT Government for supporting us and Ministers Gentleman and Rattenbury for helping to make it happen.

<https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/7314398/major-act-budget-boost-for-environmental-groups/>



Landcare ACT chief executive Karissa Preuss, volunteer Kathy Eyles, Landcare chair Maxine Cooper, Ginninderra Catchment Group coordinator Kat McGlip and Southern ACT Catchment Group executive officer Martine Franco have welcomed a multi-year funding deal ahead of the ACT budget. Picture: Keegan Carroll

We have been very busy completing our many projects from the Community Environment Grant Program (see some info on these below) and are excited by new ACT Environment Grant projects due to start soon. Check out our Facebook page and website to see what we have been up to.

On a more personal note we are very excited that Hannah, our wonderful Urban Water Officer, and partner Joel welcomed their beautiful girl Harriet into the world on the 17th June. Congratulations to them all!

Cheers, Martine (Executive Officer)

Brochures

Correa has finished the TCCS group brochures funded by the Adopt a Park Grant Program, and they look great! We hope to be able to extend the offer to create these for other groups using this look and feel in the future.



Grass ID workshop for TCCS Volunteers

Unfortunately, the weather got the better of us in March, and try as we might, we weren't able to run the promised field workshops with Alison Elvin, an Adopt a Park grant project.

To replace this Alison has prepared an illustrated document for us to help identify some of the C4 summer flowering grasses for us for participants that had signed up. Please let us know if you would like a copy.

We will be running another grass ID workshop in October for TCCS volunteers, so watch this space.

Namadgi Recovery Project

Approximately 80 percent of Namadgi National Park burnt in the devastating fires of 2019/2020 which significantly affected local plants and wildlife.

SACTCG has been working with Landcare ACT and the ACT Parks and Conservation Service to host a series of

events for members of the community to get involved in the bushfire and wildlife recovery effort.

This program has helped volunteers address high level risks to biodiversity in Namadji National Park. Volunteers worked with SACTCG and Park Rangers to weed and replant areas subject to significant weed infestation and reduced habitat for native animal's post bushfires.

There has been a total of 9 events run by SACTCG and LACT, across 2 grant programs funded by the Landcare Australia Bushfire Recovery Grant Program and WIRES - Landcare Wildlife Relief and Recovery Grant Program, in partnership with the ACT Government.

Volunteers who have taken part described the emotional effect of seeing the park in its current state. This opportunity to work closely with ACT Parks has given volunteers a sense of ownership and agency and the program is important for both environmental and human wellbeing outcomes.

Outcomes achieved across 9 events at Namadgi VIC and Glendale Picnic Area

- No. volunteers: 94
- Total volunteer Hours: 400+ hrs
- Area weeded: 25+ hectares
- Plantings: over 350 native habitat trees, shrubs and groundcovers planted.





Above photos: Volunteers at NNP

SACTCG has applied for more bushfire recovery grant funds so fingers crossed we get to do more to help Namadgi!

Landcare for Our Future update

That's it folks, the Landcare for our Future events have come to an end, and we've had a wonderful time.

Correa ran a total of nine events to get young people under 35 involved in Landcare, and give them some skills and knowledge to begin and continue their Landcare journeys in Canberra, supported by the Commonwealth Government's Communities Environment Program.

The small groups of young folks joined in on some SACTCG member group's regular working bees, including: Friends of Tuggeranong Hill, Farrer Ridge Parkcare, Minders of Tuggeranong Homestead, Isaacs Ridge Mount Mugga Mugga Parkcare, Cooleman Ridge Parkcare Group and Oakey Hill Parkcare Group. We also

held events at three different rural properties. Although numbers varied (between 5-25), overall young people were super enthusiastic about volunteering to do Landcare alongside other young people, as well as meet all the amazing Landcare and Parkcare groups and learn from their expertise knowledge and enthusiasm.

Every single participant worked hard at whatever task was at hand- whether that be planting, weeding, track maintenance or erosion control. Lot's of fun was had as well, connections were formed and participants developed a good understanding of how Landcare in the ACT works, and where to find more information to continue their involvement.

There was feedback from the young folks that information about Landcare/Parkcare groups and activities can be difficult to find, and it's daunting to go along by themselves when other volunteers are so experienced. We hope that by giving the participants a taster of Landcare and the resources to connect with their local Landcare group, this will become easier.

Correa has also started a Facebook Group with Intrepid ANU for young people in Canberra who want to connect with Landcare. She will be sharing all SACTCG's member group working bees every week to this group, and if you have any other events or resources you'd like to share with the group of young folks, email correa at communications@sactcg.org.au.

We hope we can contribute to giving all our member groups some more motivated volunteers and create some diversity among the Landcare movement- we are much stronger together 😊 Thanks to all the groups and individuals who hosted a "Landcare for our Future" event!





Above photos: Landcare for our future teams working with ParkCare Group



Ltl Acorn 1000 050F 010C 06/19/2021 15:47:27

Above: Image taken through the SACTCG wildlife camera

Woodland and Wildlife monitoring

Through the Communities Environment Program, we've purchased equipment for wildlife monitoring, and tested a woodland wildlife citizen science program with volunteers. We have successfully recorded some micro-bats with volunteers from Red Hill, and have also managed to get some wildlife monitoring cameras out on Tuggeranong Hill and Cooleman Ridge with the Parkcare groups.

Through this process we hope that we can contribute some data to the local wildlife database (Canberra nature map) and train volunteers on how to use the equipment. Next, we can lend out the equipment to any groups or individuals who are keen on getting involved in wildlife monitoring. We have 8 wildlife cameras and 8 bat detectors available.

If your group is interested in seeing what's around your reserve, get in touch. The best time of year for bat monitoring is spring/summer. The wildlife cameras need approval from the land manager, which is easiest done through SACTCG - and approvals can take a few weeks. We are excited for the animals we may find!

Steam weeder

We have pretty much finished our trials on rural properties and within TCCS Urban Open Spaces with the steam weeder, and are keen to get it out there helping in the chemical free war against weeds.

Over the last few months, the steam weeder has been on TCCS land to treat various weeds at the Weston Creek Orchard, Croton Park and Holder Wetlands.

We have trialled it on a number of weeds of concern to groups, and Hannah has been assessing the technique necessary for different species. The good news is that it is showing promise with a number of grasses and herbaceous weeds.

On the 21st July we will holding a public demonstration at Giralang Ponds, to show the Belconnen groups how it works.

We are keen to get it out to sites, so if you are interested, please let us know.



Above: SACTCG Steamweeder in action

Aerial Ecological Mapping Project

Along with our wildlife monitoring we have also been working on a woodland monitoring project using a drone. Funded by the Communities Environment Program this project was established to take aerial images using a drone with centimeter-accurate GPS resolution in two valuable ecosystems. These areas will be mapped and monitored for floral density and condition of box-gum trees, native grassland, ground cover, erosion, and weeds.

Currently we are trialing the drone in Urambi Hills looking at past plantings and woody weed distribution. This project couldn't happen without the expert help of Adam Carroll and Peter Dyce.

Project activities has so far provided valuable baseline ecological information and has begun to engage and educate volunteers in this type of citizen science activities. Long term goals are to inform on the impacts of restoration works undertaken by volunteers.

The approvals and methodologies have proven cumbersome, but progress is happening, what this space!



Above: SACTCG drone on Urambi Hills

How Park Care groups came into existence (Tony Brownlie, from the CRPCG Newsletter)

I was the manager of Canberra Nature Park during the period (1989 to 1996) when the ACT shifted from Commonwealth to Local Government. One of the many processes the new Government undertook was to "classify" land as either urban, industrial, defence, rural and conservation/recreation areas etc. Within the city limits only part of Black Mountain and a very small area of Mt Ainslie had conservation legislation.

All the other areas we now know as Canberra Nature Park were described as "Vacant Territory Land" and open to discussion for use and development by all Government Departments including private exercise. All interested parties had about 12 months to respond.

Canberra Nature Park at that time managed in sympathy with conservation ethics about 22 other areas, all having high to moderate conservation and heritage values. In order to promote the attributes of these

areas, after gaining approval from my Director, I commenced setting up Park Care groups especially in those areas which were of interest to developers.

Any land below 850m was attractive to them as water could be gravity fed to the development. Anything above that, water would have to be pumped. It sounds like a simple criterion but that's the way it was.

Giving the community ownership is a powerful management tool.

The community (ParkCarers) could publicly defend these conservation areas in a way we as Land Managers could not. Community could go public. We could not. The power of Park Care is evident every day.

Tony Brownlie

MEMBER GROUP HAPPENINGS

Coolleman Ridge ParkCare Group



*Planting at the old dam. Jenny Horsfield Alex Newman
Chris Oates Linda Spinaze Brigitte Brickwood Lyndall
Lewis. Photo: Rob Lundie*

30th Birthday Celebration

A sunny afternoon chilled by an icy wind failed to deter 25 people from attending the Group's 30th birthday celebration on the grass at the end of Kathner St. A display of photos showed the work of the Group over the years and how Coolleman Ridge has changed. The crowd enjoyed refreshments as Linda, our current President, acknowledged the Aboriginal custodianship of the Ridge, wryly noting that they had looked after it

for 30,000 years compared to the Group's 30. She then honoured the Group's founders and early leaders.

Linda observed that in the early days, the Group was very busy with the many projects that Bess Sledge had organised – not only weeding, but slashing, planting, watering, bird identification, tree surveys, removing grazing cattle from the Ridge, running stalls to raise money and writing grant requests to obtain funds for various projects.

She acknowledged the contribution of subsequent Group leaders (Pauline and Gösta Lygna, Anna See, Doug Tinney, Arminel Ryan and Alan Ford) before providing a summary of the Group's last 10 years.

The Group is now in a position to look after the Ridge at least as well as it has ever been looked after. Our numbers have increased, and we have some young, vigorous, educated and enthusiastic members to carry us forward for the next 30 years.

So, we thank the volunteers who have gone before us and who have enabled us to stand on their shoulders to achieve even greater things, and we look forward to continuing their work.'

Thanks to everyone who organised the event, who brought along refreshments and who helped us celebrate our birthday.



Linda addresses the gathering Photo: Rob Lundie

Linda Spinaze (abridged version from the CRPCG Newsletter)

Hughes Grassy Woodland

Friends of Hughes Grassy Woodland were the subject of an ACT Government video for National Volunteers Week <https://vimeo.com/548740682/ee78cc704f>

There some great drone pictures of the area in the video. Last weekend Kim and Kieran planted out some ruby salt bush, Dianella and native forget me not seedlings which Kim has raised from seeds she had collected in Section 58. We are still pulling out Cootamundra wattles – a never ending battle.

We had a great BBQ in May to wrap up the observations of the 2020-21 gang gangs breeding season. Chris Davey from COG has looked through the 268,064 images recorded by seven fixed cameras and we looked at other images seen through endoscopic cameras as well as some of the images from the fixed cameras. Chris Davey, Michael Mulvaney and Tom Tyrrell are in the process of preparing a report to be published in Canberra Bird Notes. This was our 4th season of gang gang observations and the project has been extended from its beginnings in Section 57 Hughes. With observations now being recorded in other places in Canberra. Friends of Hughes Grassy Woodland began from our desire to protect the hollow bearing trees which the gang gangs use and we had been monitoring.

Last year we submitted a nomination for a number of eucalypts on blocks 57 and 58 Hughes to be placed on the ACT Tree Register. They are currently on the Provisional List, and we are still waiting to be advised if they have been moved to the permanent list.

Jenny

Friends of Tidbinbilla

Boy, when it rains! The massive flood event in March thankfully didn't cause great deal of damage, but it definitely had an impact.

Over the last few months, we have cleaned up the garden beds as you enter the reserve, and managed to dig up a few frogs and freak out a mouse or 2 in the process. We have also begun weeding of thistles and fleabane in nearby sphagnum bogs, under the direction of our lovely rangers Sam and Ali. This is a really interesting and significant area which forms a research

study by Ben Keaney at the ANU on how these habitats respond after fire.



Flooding over the Ring Road (Photo ACT PCL)



Photo F.Spier

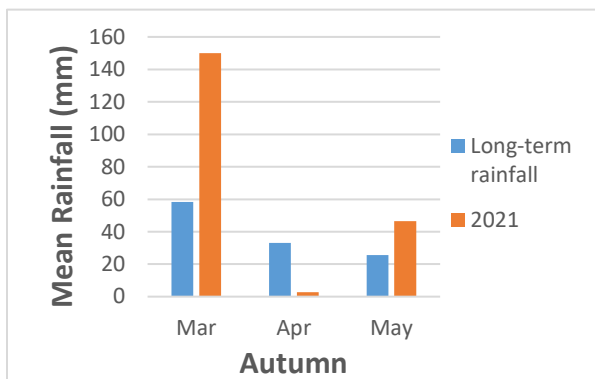


Photo F.Spier

We are pleased to welcome Scott back as a ranger at Tidbinbilla. Most recently Scott filled in the vacant Parkcare Coordinator role – a number of years go he was a wildlife officer at Tidbinbilla and it is great to see him back.

Fiona

SACTCG WATERWATCH: AUTUMN 2021



Rainfall statistics courtesy of Bureau of Meteorology

From the Coordinator's desk: A wet'n'wild March flushed out just about every waterway in the southern ACT. The construction work for an enlarged bridge over the Gudgenby river near Naas was washed clean away, closing access to Namadgi National Park and the Naas Valley for several weeks. The Orroral river low level crossing was also damaged, again, and the Orroral Road is still closed. The Cotter river had a massive burst of water over the dam, damaging footbridges around the avenue precinct. Paddy's river let go of masses of mud and the slug from this could be seen all the way to Murrumbidgee confluence and beyond in April.



Gudgenby R in flood 24th March Photo; Canberra Times

Teams update: Much changing of the guard around the lake this autumn after a callout by our fabulous Social Media guru Correa.

- Mark Anderson and Barry Young pick up Lake Tuggeranong from Lake Tuggeranong College.
- Melrose High School Student Gannu Uapdhyaya adopted another site on Lake Tuggeranong as well as Point Hut Pond. More on this later.
- Tony Greenwell and Elissa O'Keefe teamed up to do Stranger Pond.
- Win Kee joins Sijia and Justin at the northern end of Lake Tuggeranong.

Sad farewells to Colin Carpenter and the award-winning team from Lake Tuggeranong College who have both been waterwatching for several years.

In the urban lakes; **Lake Tuggeranong** was pea soup green around the shoreline from the college to the arts centre with cyanobacteria until May. **Stranger Pond** and **Point Hut Pond** suffered similar blooms from summer through until late April. The massive inflows of nutrients from the surrounding suburbs are the keys drivers for this to happen. The dry April meant little follow up flows to flush the lakes. The cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) slowly dissipated over May probably in response to cooling water. However, it can still be seen floating in water samples taken recently.



Murrumbidgee River from Cotter bridge 5th April

Autumn Water bugs and water quality: The heavy rainfall in early autumn caused flooding flows in all the major rivers. This had a dramatic effect on water bug populations, reducing numbers and diversity as many species may simply have been washed downstream. **Phosphorus levels** continued to be elevated over most waterways, with some such as **the Paddy's river, Tuggeranong creek** and **Coolman Ridge** at times being 10X as high. The **Gudgenby river** had a big dump of mud in March spiking a record **turbidity** of 160 NTU, beating **Paddy's river's** 100 NTU in April. **Nitrate** levels were the highest in the urban lakes, drains and **Guises**

creek. **Lake Tuggeranong** was the worst with 10mg/L at 2 sites in 2 different months. **Guises Creek** was the saltiest waterway by far with **Electrical Conductivity** readings mostly above 500µS. **pH** was nice and neutral everywhere apart from some caustic conditions (9-10) found in the concrete drains of **Tuggeranong** and slightly acidic (5.5) water in **Cooleman Ridge dams**. **Dissolved oxygen** was at healthy concentrations but there were extremely low levels (<4.0mg/L) found in fire affected creeks in **Namadgi NP** and in **Conder Wetlands** just before it was dredged.

The **Murrumbidgee river** had mostly '**degraded**' bug scores as diversity suffered.

The **Cotter river** above the Cotter dam only got a '**fair**' again, due to lack of diversity. Apart from blackfly larvae all the bugs found were highly sensitive including an impressive predatory Eustheniidae stonefly larvae. Check out the pointy jaws on the cute little monster below! At Vanity's crossing things improved a lot as 11 typed were found with hundreds of mayfly and caddisfly larvae in the trays, it scored a '**good**' rating. Below the dam the score was only '**fair**' for probably the same reason, massive flooding.

At **Paddy's river** mayfly and caddisfly larvae were abundant again but the river achieved a '**degraded**' score due to low diversity.

The **Naas river** in the national park scored a '**fair**' assessment as a result of revealing only 7 bug types. A huge sand deposit at the lowest crossing showed this river had also seen big flows. In the rural valley the bugs numbers were enough to get a '**good**' score.

In **Tidbinbilla Reserve**, a survey of the river and one of the ponds showed '**fair**' levels of water bugs. Great diversity but most of the bugs were of the tougher varieties. The river had no stonefly larvae which have been seen there in the past. Over the ridge **Gibraltar creek** also only gained a '**fair**' score. This is sad as this creek can usually be relied upon to give the best bug surveys in our region.

Lake Tuggeranong's Tuggeranong creek got one of the few '**excellent**' scores this autumn. Under the Monaro Hwy Woo found stonefly larvae for the first time along with 'stacks' of mayflies. The main body only received a '**degraded**' bug score down to the Town Park Beach driven by extremely low numbers of anything other than water boatman and shrimp. The southern 'wetland' section got a '**fair**' score with good number of caddisfly and many damselfly larvae. Below the dam a '**fair**' score gain with masses of water boatmen, and for some reason lots of water mites. This season I surveyed **Isabella Pond** in the large wetland area adjacent to Isabella Drive. Here were found a good range of bugs but they were all from the 'tough' end of town, so the final score was no more than '**fair**'.

Point Hut Pond received a '**fair**' score. Water boatmen were the only bugs found in any number. **Stranger Pond** lacked numbers and diversity. This gave it a '**degraded**' score.

The **Cooleman Ridge** dam surveyed had lots of different types of bugs. There were several large needle bugs and a lovely water scorpion. Several types of water mites joined multiple species of beetles, mayfly and caddisfly to give the dam a '**fair**' scoring.

Namadgi National Park was alive with good numbers of sensitive bugs to gain '**excellent**' and '**good**' scores in 2 creeks. The **Orroral river** did not do so well with only a '**fair**' score with low diversity again the culprit.

Only found 4 types of waterbugs were caught at the mouth of the **Gudgenby river** in April, a month after the massive flood, earning it a '**poor**' score.

Other creeks around the south including **Barney's Gully**, **Gibraltar** and **Guises creeks** all scored '**fair**' on the bug scale for varying reasons, such as low diversity (Gibraltar) or lack of pollution sensitive bugs (the other two). A weird find this autumn were thousands of springtails (*Collembola*) in the **Tuggeranong concrete stormwater channels**. (Yes I also check them for bugs for CHIP). The drain always gets a '**degraded**' score. Springtails are extremely tough. They will thrive in damp soil.



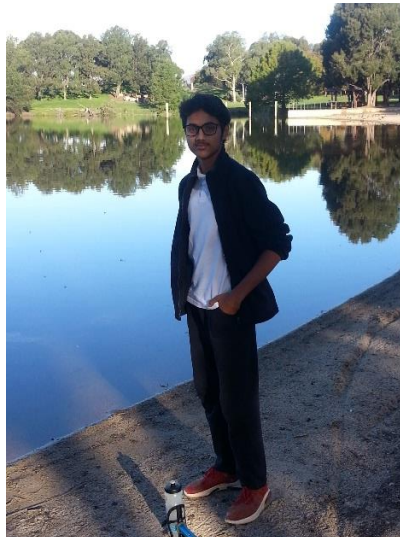
Predatory stonefly larvae from upper Cotter river. (Photo DBrown)

Around the schools: **Lake Tuggeranong College** has sadly had to wind up the 'Sustainability Unit' which has been running since 2014. They have monitored 6 different locations around Lake Tuggeranong over the years and have been regular participants in the biennial Bug Blitz', Frogwatch and Platypus month surveys.

This year Pavitra Uapdhyaya, year 9 student from **Melrose High School**, will be comparing Point Hut Pond to Lake Tuggeranong using water quality and waterbug data this year as his research project for the **Science Mentors ACT** program. Other schools that engaged in Waterwatch education over autumn include; **Canberra Girls Grammar, Hawker Primary School, Gordon Primary School, Kaleen High School** and **Holy Trinity College**. Educators from the **National Botanic Gardens** and the **Woodlands and Wetlands trust** were also given some in-service waterbug training this season. The **Southwell Scout group** undertook the water bug sampling in Namadgi National as they have done for every autumn Park since 2019.



Holy Trinity College Yr11 Ecology class at Tidbinbilla



Pavitra Uapdhyaya at Lake Tuggeranong



Southwell Scout Group's 'Brindabella Venturers' testing at the Gudgenby river. (Photo: JLehane)

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>

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
Kat: ruralprojects@sactcg.org.au

www.sactcg.org.au

Facebook page: Southern ACT Catchment Group

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

