

## IMPORTANT DATES

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

FEBRUARY 2022

## FROM THE OFFICE

Hi all,

Welcome to 2022! After a well earned break the office is humming again and we are keen to get on the ground and get to work.

A lot has happened since the last newsletter, including a new staff member. Some of you will have met Jeff Eichler, our new project officer working on the Namadgi Bushfire Recovery project. More from him later in the newsletter.

Also, we will be welcoming Hannah back after her maternity leave at the end of this month.

Cheers, Martine (Executive Officer)

## ACT ENVIRONMENTAL VOLUNTEERS

Recently the Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment released 'ACT Environmental Volunteers: Showcasing volunteer environment work'.

In launching the report, The Commissioner for the Environment, Dr Sophie Lewis said *'We are extremely lucky in the ACT to have many volunteers and organisations working to preserve and protect our natural areas and species. The report website explores how volunteer contributions to a healthy environment in the ACT are measured, recognised, and valued. First and foremost, it is a celebration of the work that you all do.'*

*In the report you will find volunteers' stories, different types of volunteer opportunities, and benefits and values of volunteering for the environment in the ACT. For instance, the report estimated that the equivalent wage cost for environmental volunteering work in the ACT would be over \$21.5 million per year.*

*The environmental volunteering space in the ACT is complex, with many government agencies and non-government organisations involved in supporting the thousands of people who give their time to protect, restore, and expand our knowledge of the natural environment.*

find the report website at  
[www.actenvirovolunteers.com.au](http://www.actenvirovolunteers.com.au).



## **ACT LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY INQUIRY INTO ENVIRONMENTAL VOLUNTEERISM**

As you may be aware, the Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity for inquiring into environmental volunteerism in the ACT. See [Inquiry into Environmental Volunteerism - ACT Legislative Assembly](#)

The closing date has been extended to March 10.

SACTCG will be developing a submission and work with Landcare ACT in developing their submission. Please forward any of your ideas and comments if you would like them incorporated to ours to: Martine ([info@sactcg.org.au](mailto:info@sactcg.org.au))

or

For Landcare ACT to Karissa Preuss  
([ceo@landcareact.org.au](mailto:ceo@landcareact.org.au))

## **NAMADGI RECOVERY PROJECT**

Hi everyone Just a quick report on how the volunteering is going in Namadgi National Park, and what can be expected with more recovery efforts scheduled in 2022.

We have had a great response to volunteering during the period between last year's lockdown and the end of 2021, with 4 events held in Namadgi and Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of December we had 14 volunteers join us for a work party at Glendale Depot, removing weeds and learning how the 2019-20 bushfires affected some of the grasslands in the park.

Then over in Tidbinbilla Nature reserve on the 6<sup>th</sup> of December the Friends of Tidbinbilla ventured into montane bog country to assess the impact of weeds, identify and learn about the keystone species sphagnum moss. The removal of blackberry, thistle and St Johns wort was beneficial for the health of the bogs, as well as admiring all of the orchids that were in season along the way. The following weekend of the 11<sup>th</sup> volunteers traveled out to meet with the Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group at readycut cottage to address some woody weeds, also Doug Brown the convenor for "The Bushies" gave our volunteers a history lesson of the valley, the hard work they have put in to restore endemic bushland in the area and the effects of the past 2 fires have had on the area.

Researcher Ben Keaney From the ANU led a interpretive walk on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December through the lowland montane bogs of Square rock for a lucky group of 10 volunteers. Ben outlined many functions of the bogs while explaining the effects of fire, regeneration post fire and the end result from the 2003 and 2019-20 fires leaving us with a greater sense of awe for the environment we care for.





Glendale Depot, clearing of “Verbascum Hill”



Friends of Tidbinbilla assessing weeds in the bogs.



Gudgenby Valley,  
Square rock Bogs, the learning adventure.  
Overlooking “The Bushies” Hard work.

## Brochures

This year, thanks again to ACT Government funding, we will have some capacity to create brochures for any groups who would like some (ParkCare or TCCS). Please let Correa know at [communications@sactcg.org.au](mailto:communications@sactcg.org.au) if you would like to work on a new brochure for your group.

## WILDLIFE MONITORING

A reminder that thanks to funding from ACT Government, we are able to assist any groups who would like to use the SACTCG wildlife cameras or bat monitors for any kind of wildlife monitoring, scientific project or event. So far, we have had interest from Mt Taylor Parkcare who will be taking the cameras out in February for a few weeks to monitor species on the reserve. We are excited to see what they find! Get in touch if your group is interested at [communications@sactcg.org.au](mailto:communications@sactcg.org.au), Correa will be able to provide training and equipment.

## GRASS ID WORKSHOP FOR TCCS VOLUNTEERS

SACTCG will be running another grass identification course on the 26<sup>th</sup> February. The lovely Alison Elvin from Natural Capital will be sharing her knowledge with us again. These workshops are funded through an Adopt A Park Grant and are for volunteers working in TCCS reserves.

As those of you who know Alison know, she looks at the landscape holistically and stresses 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 will be followed up with two field site sessions on the 5<sup>th</sup> March – at Griffith Woodland and the Monash grasslands – so that participants can test out their identification skills.

## MONASH GRASSLANDS

SACTCG has a grant from Friends of Grasslands (FOG) to create a couple of interpretive signs at the Monash Grasslands near Isabella Pond. We also have an ACT “Nature in our City” Environment Grant, to help build a TCCS Landcare group at the pond, undertake a scrape and sow on the site to help extend the native grassland, and do a few plantings down near the pond to contribute to urban cooling.



In collaboration with FOG and previously Greening Australia, we have determined this Native Temperate Grassland site is extremely valuable, holding a huge range of diversity among flora species. In early December, Correa held a Walk and Talk with Margaret Ning from Friends of Grasslands, to show Monash locals the value of the grassland. We had a fantastic turnout of both locals and FOG/SACTCG members which was impressive considering the strange weather we were having that day. Some highlight species from the walk include Blue Devil, Creamy Candles, Hoary Sunrays, and wallaby grass. Margaret Ning, Rainer Rehwinkel, Andrew Zelnick, Judith Gamper and Michael Beddingfield from FOG all helped on the day to identify species and in the end came up with an impressive species list for the site- thank you FOG! We are continuing to engage locals interested in the site, as well as work on plans for both of these grants.

If you're ever looking to see some gorgeous NTG species- why not visit Monash Grasslands?



## LANDCARE ACT- WELLBEING THROUGH NATURE PROGRAM

*Contribution from Sally Holliday ( Landcare ACT )*

I'm writing to introduce myself and welcome your knowledge, skills and experience in shaping Landcare ACT's new Wellbeing program - *Wellbeing through Nature*.

Supported by Canberra Healthy Grants, *Wellbeing through Nature* aims to improve mental health, social connectedness and overall wellbeing amongst Canberrans through participation in nature-based activities. These will include guided walks, conservation activities and therapeutic horticulture. These programs will include mindfulness and sensory activation techniques as a means by which to appreciate nature's beauty and complexity. The program is supported by the ACT Government Canberra Healthy Grants. Additional information can be found on our website: <https://landcareact.moble.site/wellbeing>

As you are probably very aware, caring for the land can lead to an increased sense of belonging and oneness with nature. Studies worldwide have shown strong health benefits associated with nature-based activity, and land caring is no exception: <https://landcareaustralia.org.au/wellbeing-report/>

The *Wellbeing through Nature* intends to amplify and build on that inherent sense of wellbeing experienced through caring for land and waterways. The program is designed to celebrate the existing work being undertaken by landcarers, raise community awareness of this work, and bring new participants in to assist with this work.

We welcome your knowledge, skills and experience in shaping the *Wellbeing through Nature* program. We'd love to know what your local group is up to and if you would like to share your special local place with others through a guided walk or naturalist talk.

We will also be working with the Catchment Groups to support new volunteers in plantings and Landcare working bees. So please contact either your Catchment Group staff or myself if you have activities planned, particularly those that would benefit from a few extra hands. If you have a passion project or special interest that may be relevant to the program, please get in touch.

A *Wellbeing through Nature* information session will be scheduled over coming weeks. This will be an opportunity to come together and discuss ideas. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me directly if you have any questions, I'm very keen to hear from you.

Sally  
Wellbeing@landcareACT.org.au

## NEW WEEDS

The wet conditions seem to have been a boom for new weeds, please be on the lookout for Sulphur Cinquefoil and Mediterranean Spurge.



Sulphur Cinquefoil



Mediterranean Spurge

**Sulphur Cinquefoil** (*Potentilla recta*) is an early invader or emerging issue for the lowlands, it is listed as medium risk partly because it is data deficient for measured impacts.

A perennial herb, tufted growing from a taproot, produces leafy stems up to 80cm tall. It has bright yellow flowers.

It has been around a while, but has potential to become a moderate problem, especially during wet years. In the urban environment it has so far mostly been recorded on Canberra's north side, but is also in Namadgi National Park

**Mediterranean Spurge** (*Euphorbia* spp) is a common garden plant, but is taking off in these moist conditions. It has a milky sap which is caustic, so avoid contact – this means no hand weeding!

**St John's Wort**, although not new, is doing very well in these conditions. Although, usually the advice is not to pull out due to the roots regrowing, there are concerns about damage to surrounding forbes by chemical. Steve Taylor has provided a really good St Johns Decision Tree, which is great for deciding the best way to treat St Johns in different situations, and yes, in some cases pulling out is best.

If you would like a copy, please contact Fiona.

## FACEBOOK

We have an amazing 815- followers! if you haven't liked our page, get on it! @SACTCG  
Facebook is a great way of getting information out the community. If you would like events shared, let us know.

## MOUSE PLAGUE - DON'T BAIT OUR NATIVE SPECIES (FROM GINNINDERRA CATCHMENT GROUP)

The last 18 months have brought significant rainfall across the east coast of Australia, with increased vegetation growth and record grain harvests across many regions.

With the bounty, has come unprecedented rat and mouse plagues devastating regional towns and major cities. With many people rushing out to stock up on rodent poison, there have been increased wildlife poisoning and deaths recorded for many iconic species.

Wedge-tailed eagles, Powerful Owls and many large reptiles are suffering from eating rodent prey which contains significant levels of common bait poisons. Many BirdLife Australia and many wildlife organisations are urging the public to consider more environmentally friendly rodenticides or consider other alternatives like trapping.

More environmentally friendly alternatives to Ratsak and other common rodenticides include;

- Coumatetralyl - Racumin or Couma for example. This metabolite quickly in treated rats which carry very low residual levels. This reduces the risk of secondary poisoning
  - Sodium Chloride or Ratsak Natural is a more natural alternative rodenticide that affects thirst receptors in rats and mice, with a lower risk of poisoning non-target species
- These and other eco-friendly options are available online and at most local hardware stores.



Recently we identified three of these species, one by just walking up behind our houses, one through a deliberate search and the other by accident. All this happened within a few weeks of each other, making October a very exciting month for our group.

As at 2019, the State of the Environment Report states that there were 7 critically endangered species, 18 endangered species, 26 vulnerable species and one regionally conservation dependent species in the ACT. There are action plans and/or conservation advice for all species listed as threatened in the ACT.

### **The Hoary Sunray (*Leucochrysum albicans* var. *tricolor*)**

Last year with all the rain we had a spectacular display of Hoary Sunrays. The Hoary Sunray is a small, perennial paper daisy endemic to south-eastern Australia, where it occurs in New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, Victoria and Tasmania.

This wonderfully hardy and attractive forb made a spectacular display behind our houses for months on end this year. We haven't seen it anywhere else on the Hill. Despite being on the Commonwealth Endangered Species list, and listed as Threatened in Victoria and Tasmania, it doesn't appear to have a similar status in the ACT.

## **MEMBER GROUP HAPPENINGS**

### **Friends of Tuggeranong Hill**

Friends of Tuggeranong Hill have a number of vulnerable plants and animals in our Reserve. It makes our work seem particularly special, providing an added motivation to get out on the Hill. Cutting and dabbing, chipping and lopping; and then doing it again (you all know the story!)





The Hoary Sunray is in an area which is mowed every summer for fire protection as it proliferates between houses and the maintenance track bordering the reserve. Its reach was considerably expanded this year probably due to the rain - hopefully it will come back next year.

#### **Pale Pomaderris (*Pomaderris Pallida*)**

The Pale Pomaderris (PP) is known to occur in the ACT, southern NSW, and eastern Victoria with the majority of the populations located along the Murrumbidgee, Cotter, and Paddy's Rivers in the ACT. We had consulted *ACTmapi* and knew the general areas where the plant was growing, but found it hard to identify in the field from the photos and description provided on the internet. Canberra *NatureMapr* came to the rescue by identifying the exact location of one plant, which was easily identifiable as it was on the edge of the small dam on the western side of the Hill. From this location, we headed into the surrounding area and found several very healthy populations of between 25 – 100 flowering plants, each group covering at least a football ground in size.

As required under ACT government legislation, all threatened species require the development of 'Conservation Advice' which was developed for the PP in 2019. One of the management actions listed

is the removal of woody weeds. We have mapped on Field Maps a large area of Briar Rose which is close to one of these populations.



#### **The Pink Tailed Worm Lizard (*Aprasia parapulchella*)**

The Pink-tailed Worm-lizard is a small worm-like legless lizard with a slender body, a blunt head and a long round-tipped pinkish tail. The PtWL lives in the burrows of ant nests in soil beneath rocks, where it feeds on the eggs and larvae of ants within these nests. Consequently, it is rarely observed and can be very difficult to find, even when known to be present at a site. Ecologist Richard Milner said in an interview in 2015 that "If farms and nature reserves have the pink-tailed worm-lizard's then we can actually predict that 20 other species of lizards and some small snakes will be living around those rocky areas as well."

SACTG helped us successfully obtain a grant under the *Nature and the City* Grants program for the protection of the habitat of the Pink Tailed Worm Lizard (PtWL). We have been diligently weeding by hand around the areas targeted in the submission. The name is quite a mouthful, and it was a standing joke amongst us that no-one had ever seen, or was likely to see, a PtWL in real life.

Some of our groups were weeding a large swathe of lavender in a different part of the hill when a rock was dislodged in the process, and a PtWL discovered underneath it! The photo below was taken and has been confirmed by *NatureMapr*. This has been cause for great excitement and proof positive that the PtWL does exist on Tuggeranong Hill.



We are very lucky to have such a rich environment on our doorstep, a committed group of volunteers to help us protect it, and the strength of SACTCG to represent and support us to obtain additional resources for our wonderful Hill.

*Friends of Tuggeranong Hill Parkcare group.*

### Griffith Woodland Volunteer Group

It is wonderful to see the Griffith Woodland being used as an educational resource for young students. In October 2020 Dr Michael Mulvaney (one of our important mentors from Red Hill Regenerators and field expert in all things mineral, plant and animal!) led a visit by Grade 3 students from Red Hill Primary School. Students had the chance to apply their classroom knowledge of biodiversity, conservation and interdependence of species to the field as Michael explained the significance of ant nests, lerps on leaves and reasons why wood should be left on the ground. It is important to be educating the next generation, not only for our woodland, but urban nature reserves and Landcare in general. We hope to maintain and encourage collaborative projects with local schools such as RHPS.



Dr Michael Mulvaney



### Mount Taylor Parkcare Group

#### **Once in a generation wet years bring new discoveries on Mt Taylor**

Yes, the rain has aided weed growth but has also gifted us bumper seeding and regrowth of our native grasses, shrubs and healthy new canopy for our droughted yellow box and red box trees.

Exciting wildflower discoveries in 2021 were the Murnong yam daisy *Microseris lanceolata* (the first recorded since Anne l'ons started our botanical records 33 years ago) and new locations for a suite of orchids – the sun orchid *Thelymitra pauciflora*, Green-combed spider orchids *Caladenia atrovessa* and onion orchids *Microtis* sp. We were treated to literally fields of leopard orchids *Diuris Pardina* Fairy aprons *Utricularia dichotoma* and Milkmaids *Burchardia umbrellata*.





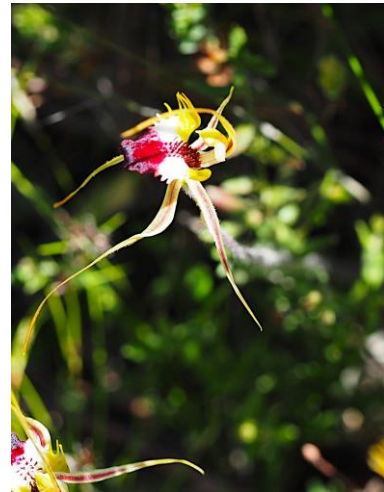
Murnong Yam Daisy (Kathy Eyles)



Slender sun orchid (Matthew Frawley)



Milkmaid (Ross Osborne)



Green-combed Spider Orchid (Ross Osborne)

But perhaps the most heartwarming discovery for 2021 was the sighting of a pair of Glossy black cockatoos before Christmas, feeding on the casuarinas along the Zig Zag trail. The sighting was uploaded on e-bird by visiting Sydney birders and confirmed with pics on Naturemap. Our casuarina forests have increased on Mt Taylor particularly on the eastern and western slopes, a legacy of the 2003 Canberra bushfires providing wonderful natural habitat for this endangered species.



Glossy Black Cockatoos on Mt Taylor – Patrick Cox courtesy of Naturemapr

*Kathy Eyles*



### EUPHORBIA PLANTS

Health and safety advisors  
Workplace managers  
Safety notice boards  
Health and safety representatives

#### **Description of issue**

Euphorbia (commonly known as Spurges and Milkweed) are common garden plants that are becoming more frequent on roadsides, reserves, and other open space areas in the ACT.

Euphorbia has a white milky sap that causes skin irritation and caustic effects when it comes into the contact with the skin.

In contact with mucous membranes (eyes, nose, mouth), the milky sap can produce extremely painful inflammation. Exposure to recently cut plants can also cause breathing difficulties.



#### **Safety considerations**

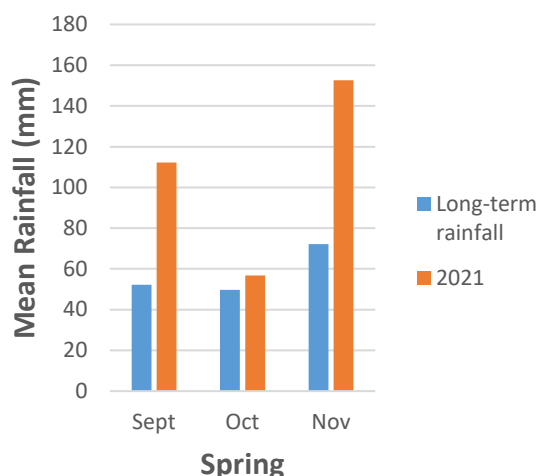
Euphorbia should be handled with caution.

TCCS employees are advised to wear appropriate full-length clothing, gloves and eye protection while working in close contact with Euphorbia. Face Shields and respirators are optional but should be considered if employees are cutting and handling Euphorbia plants.

Complete a take 5, prior to commencement of Mowing or Whipping. Check for plants that may be present and implement the appropriate controls.



## Southern ACT Waterwatch: spring 2021



Rainfall statistics courtesy of Bureau of Meteorology

### Volunteer update:

A sad farewell this October to the last of the **Carers of Point Hut Pond** Waterwatchers, as **Stephen Dellar** hands back his sampling pole. One of Stephen's many talents was as a bird photographer. Below is one of a white heron landing at Point Hut Pond.



Jed Pearson Molonglo WW Coordinator

### Spring Water bugs and water quality:

Spring's high rainfall and subsequent increased flows brought, as usual, mixed blessings around our southern waterways. The major rivers enjoyed the flush, while the urban lakes and drains experienced a range of issues including increased nutrient and salt loads. Small levels of phosphorus were recorded right around the region, most likely a legacy of the 2020 fires. A brief summary of water quality for each main water way is provided below.

The **Murrumbidgee River** had '**excellent**' water bug scores along much of its ACT length as populations of very sensitive species established in the cool high flows this year. A spike of mud was recorded in November but otherwise the river remained clear.

The **Cotter river** above the Cotter dam only got a '**fair**' again, due to lack of diversity and below the dam it was considered '**degraded**' for the same reason. Ironically the water quality was the best of all the rivers with excellent readings of all the parameters we measure.



**Paddy's river** received an '**excellent**' score, a complete turnaround from autumn. Very surprising considering it had the muddiest water in the southern ACT.

The **Naas river** in the national park also scored an '**excellent**' assessment this season. At Caloola Farm the bug numbers were enough to get a '**good**' score. All the significant sensitive species being present throughout. Extreme flow events did not seem to affect the river's condition.

The **Gudgenby river** scored only a '**fair**' rating. Like the Cotter river low diversity was the issue even though there were several of pollution sensitive species. Water quality too was excellent.

In **Tidbinbilla Reserve**, a survey of the main pond in the sanctuary showed '**fair**' levels of water bugs with lots of diversity but mostly the tougher (SIGNAL<3) varieties. **Gibraltar creek** also recovered to gain an '**excellent**' score again in its pristine water. Unlike Gibraltar creek, the Tidbinbilla water ways all had small amounts of phosphorus.

**Namadgi National Park** was again crawling with high numbers of sensitive bugs to gain '**excellent**' and '**good**' scores in 2 creeks. Phosphorus levels simmered through October then jumped up with high stream flows in November.

**Lake Tuggeranong's** Tuggeranong creek under the Monaro Hwy had masses of mayfly larvae among other sensitive species and good diversity to gain a '**good**' score. Water quality here was good again. The main body only received a '**degraded**' bug score near the new floating wetlands. The southern 'wetland' section continued to get a '**fair**' score with good diversity. The lake had a continuous, sometimes high, level of nitrates along with a spike of phosphorus in October. Dissolved oxygen in the lake was also very low. The creek below the dam got a '**fair**' with high diversity but low numbers of anything other than water boatmen. The water here was more turbid than the lake and carried a high level of phosphorus as well.

In **Isabella Pond** were again found a good range of pollution tolerant bugs, the final score was '**fair**'. The water quality was poor, often high in salts and nitrates and low in oxygen and sometimes muddy after heavy rain.

**Point Hut Pond** dropped to a '**degraded**' score, with low numbers and diversity. It also had high nitrate levels. **Stranger Pond** improved to get a '**fair**' with some sensitive bugs making up the 8 types found. Like the other lakes high nitrates and salinity levels were recorded.

The **Coolleman Ridge** dam surveyed had large numbers but only of 7 species. Needle bugs were again a delight to find here even if the overall rating was considered '**degraded**'. Both dams experienced acidic water low in oxygen.

**Barney's Gully** got a '**fair**' score again this season with hundreds of water mites (SIGNAL 6) being the most sensitive type. **Guises creek** got a '**good**' bug score with high diversity and a good number of sensitive species. Both these creeks have good water quality from the flushing rain. Guises is a 'baseflow' spring with a rocky bed and constant flows. Barneys is 'ephemeral' with a clay bed that often reduces to stagnant pools.

The **Tuggeranong stormwater drains** often hide surprises and this spring was the only place I found a gordian worm. The score as ever was '**degraded**' as the only other creatures were fly larvae and segmented worms. The water was sometimes acidic or caustic, lacked oxygen, was often salty and/or muddy and mostly very high in nutrient loads.



*Gordian worm (Wikipedia)*



*A steady stream of nutrient rich water in the drains.*



*Paddy's river in full flow (MBlume)*

### ***Around the schools:***

The ACT lockdown meant all education activities were online via video platforms. I had the pleasure of joining **Bonython Primary School Yr5/6** for a chat about what we do as Waterwatchers and giving a side show to **Lake Tuggeranong Sea Scout's Cub pack** about water quality in Lake Tuggeranong, and why it is often so green and smelly. Online support was also provided over the 3 months for a student of the **ACT Science Mentoring** program. The wonderful team from **Caroline Chisholm High School** continued their invaluable checking on Isabella Pond and its drains.

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

