



Friends of
Grasslands

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



Prepared for the FOG Annual General Meeting, Wednesday, 30 April, 2025
Conservation Council Offices, Lena Karmel Lodge, Barry Drive, Acton, ACT



supporting native grassy ecosystems



All requirements of subsection 73(1) of the ACT *Associations Incorporation Act 1991* are met in this Annual Report of Friends of Grasslands Inc for the financial year 2024. Specifically, the presentation of statement to members requires that “At each annual general meeting of an incorporated association the following documents must be presented by the committee for the consideration of the meeting:

- (a) the required statement of the association’s accounts for the most recently ended financial year of the association;
- (b) a copy of the reviewer’s or auditor’s report to the association in relation to the association’s accounts for that financial year;
- (c) a report signed by 2 members of the committee stating—
 - (i) the name of each member of the committee of the association during the most recently ended financial year of the association and, if different, at the date of the report; and
 - (ii) the principal activities of the association during the most recently ended financial year and any significant change in the nature of those activities that occurred during that financial year; and
 - (iii) the net profit or loss of the association for the most recently ended financial year.”



Jamie Pittock, President 2024



Helen Sims, Secretary 2024

This report was compiled and edited by Helen Sims, Secretary of FOG 2024, from contributions provided by active members of FOG. I am grateful to Andrew Zelnik, as ever, for his photos, assistance with presentation, and others as acknowledged for their photos. Thanks also to Richard Bomford for his website assistance. The report goes only a short way towards informing just how much commitment of time and energy is freely given in any year to the support of native grassy ecosystems. **To all volunteers, THANK YOU!!**

Friends of Grasslands (FOG) acknowledges and celebrates First Nations Peoples, the Traditional Custodians of the grassy ecosystems that we strive to conserve. We respect their elders past and present. We appreciate that grassy ecosystems are cultural landscapes. We commit to collaborating with Traditional Custodians to manage grassy ecosystems to support traditional and ongoing social, economic, cultural and spiritual values.

Front Cover Images:

Top – Canberra Grassland Earless Dragon (*Tympanocryptis lineata*) – mid-summer, Canberra ACT. Photo – Jess Thomson

Bottom - Monaro Grassland Earless Dragon (*Tympanocryptis osbornei*) in torpor - late winter, Dry Plain NSW. Photo – Andrew Zelnik

Back Cover Images:

Top – Wildflowers on display Hall Cemetery grassland, Hall ACT, November 2024. Photo – Andrew Zelnik

Bottom–Wildflowers and view to the south on Tasmanian Land Conservancy’s Vale of the Belvoir Reserve, Middlesex TAS, January 2024. Photo – Andrew Zelnik

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Friends of Grasslands Vision and Rationale

The Friends of Grasslands Inc vision, together with clarified goals and the rationale behind the vision, have remained unchanged since January 2022.

*Healthy, biodiverse and connected remnant native grassy ecosystems
continue to support life on Earth*

FOG will achieve this vision by:

- Acting to halt the decline of native grassy ecosystems and their biodiversity and achieve the maximum level of recovery possible
- Promoting and facilitating protection of the biodiversity of grassy ecosystems within and across the landscape
- Recognising the need for community stewardship of these ecosystems, thereby continuing the cultural care provided by the Aboriginal peoples for millennia
- Respecting the views and knowledge of all stakeholders and working with them to achieve our vision
- Facilitating implementation of best practice management and encouraging development of methods to improve conservation through hands-on application, research, education, strategic planning and monitoring
- Advocating for effective environmental laws, enforcement mechanisms, planning and management to underpin protection and conservation of native grassy ecosystems.

Rationale:

- Native ecosystems and their biodiversity have intrinsic value.
- Resilient native ecosystems are vital to our physical well-being through the provision of ecosystem services.
- Human connections and interaction with nature and biodiversity are vital to our mental well-being.
- The cultural traditions of Aboriginal peoples underpin our unique native habitats and guide the principles and implementation of sustainable and conservative use of our grassy ecosystems within the broader landscape.
- Biodiversity cannot be sustained in isolated remnants.

Membership - Heather Sweet, Coordinator

At the end of 2024, FOG had 189 members, a decrease from 2023. Most FOG members are individuals or families - landowners and managers, environmental science professionals, land and park carers, conservationists and naturalists. There were also six corporate entities and 10 not-for-profit organisations with FOG membership

FOG Committee and FOG Roles in 2024

Apart from the obvious roles of President, Vice Presidents, Secretary, Treasurer and Committee members, there are many ongoing roles undertaken by FOG – Advocacy, Supported Projects (grants from the Gift Fund), Events & activities coordination, On-ground project coordination, Communications, Website management, Dropbox management, Governance compliance; Membership coordination and management, Book sales, Representing FOG in other organisations, Public Officer.

While it is of interest to display activities and functions that are involved, this year we thought it appropriate to display the roles and functions that participating FOG members undertake that aid in the achievement of FOG’s objectives. There are many others, unnamed in this report, who also contribute to fieldwork, working parties and who attend events that FOG holds.

Committee	
President	Jamie Pittock
Vice Presidents	Sarah Sharp, Hugh Coppell (until September 2024)
Secretary	Helen Sims
Treasurer	David Johnson
Committee members	Margaret Ning, Trevor Preston, Julia Raine, Rainer Rehwinkel, Fay Wareham, Matt Whitting Heather Sweet – Standing Participating Observer from May
Roles undertaken during 2024- Committee members	
Jamie Pittock	President Health and safety Advocacy group NCA liaison, grant Gurubung Dhaura management. Blue Gum Point management, grant
Sarah Sharp	Vice president Advocacy group Biodiversity Network coordinator Book sales Vegwatch monitoring St Marks liaison Archiving Supported projects review Dropbox “ownership” Website review Biodiversity Conservation Forum rep NRM Community Consultation Group FOG rep on Conservation Council Biodiversity Working Group and FOG rep for Conservation Council AGM Storage unit contact Banking
Hugh Coppell (until September 2024)	Vice president Advocacy group Biodiversity Conservation Forum FOG rep on Conservation Council Biodiversity Working Group /chair Weeds Stakeholder Group
David Johnson	Treasurer Banking

	Gift fund financials Financial reporting
Helen Sims	Secretary Governance issues Archiving FOG rep on Conservation Council Biodiversity Working Group and FOG rep for Conservation Council AGM
Margaret Ning	Committee member Field trips coordination Newsletter editing Events and notices Annual mid-winter event Franklin Grassland liaison and management St Marks grassland on ground Top Hut TSR management Membership Banking Supported Projects Review
Julia Raine	Committee member Advocacy group Website review Parkcare Convenors Group
Trevor Preston	Committee member Advocacy group Website review
Matt Whitting	Committee member Advocacy coordinator Public officer Governance issues
Fay Wareham	Committee member Newsletter distribution Info contact Supported Projects Review
Emily Sutcliffe	Committee member
Rainer Rehwinkel	Committee member Advocacy group Biodiversity Working Group FOG rep on Conservation Council Biodiversity Working Group and FOG rep for Conservation Council AGM
Non-committee representatives	Roles undertaken in 2024
Heather Sweet	Membership coordination and reporting
John Fitz Gerald	Dropbox management Advocacy group Ginninderry Scrape monitoring Hall Cemetery liaison and management Yarramundi Grasslands on-ground Bush on the Boundary: Ginninderry Vegwatch monitoring
Paul Archer	Newsletter
Michael Mulvaney	Advocacy group
Geoff Robertson	Advocacy group
Alice Hawthorn	Advocacy group

Janet Russell	Information contact Post box
Richard Bomford	FOG email administrator Website
Eleanor Galvin	Events and notices bulletin
Meredith Cosgrove	Weeds Stakeholder Group
Pauline Hore	Auditor
Andrew Zelnik	Field trips Supported projects grants and management
Linda Spinaze	Scottsdale monitoring
Advocacy team	Sarah Sharp and Hugh Coppell/Matt Whitting (coordinators), John Fitz Gerald*, Alice Hathorn*, Michael Mulvaney*, Jamie Pittock, Trevor Preston, Julia Raine, Rainer Rehwinkel, Geoff Robertson, Matt Whitting
Supported Projects team	Andrew Zelnik* (retiring coordinator) Review Sub-committee: Matt Whitting, Fay Wareham, Sarah Sharp
Events & activities coordinators	Eleanor Galvin*, Kath McGuirk* (NSW publicity) Margaret Ning
On-ground project coordinators	John Fitz Gerald*, Margaret Ning, Jamie Pittock, Linda Spinaze*
Communication team	Newsletter – Paul Archer*, Libby Keen*, Margaret Ning, Sue Ross*, Sarah Sharp replaced by Fay Wareham (distribution) e-Bulletins and Special Bulletins – Margaret Ning (coordinator) and Eleanor Galvin* (editing, publishing) Facebook access – Rainer Rehwinkel, Julia Raine, Trevor Preston Management of correspondence received through info@fog.org.au – Janet Russell*
Website manager	Richard Bomford*; Review of website: Julia Raine, Sarah Sharp, Trevor Preston
Dropbox	John Fitz Gerald*
Governance sub-committee; ACNC contact	Helen Sims, Matt Whitting
Membership	Margaret Ning, Heather Sweet (coordinator)
Book sales	Sarah Sharp
Representing FOG in other organisations	Hugh Coppell, John Fitz Gerald*, Alice Hathorn*, Margaret Ning, Jamie Pittock, Rainer Rehwinkel, Sarah Sharp, Helen Sims, Andrew Zelnik*
Public Officer	Matt Whitting

*=non Committee members

President's Report

Friends of Grasslands (FOG) turned 30 in November 2024 and we took time to reflect on and celebrate what we have achieved. FOG has close to 200 members, mostly in south eastern Australia, who bring great commitment, knowledge and experience to our work for conservation of grassy ecosystems. FOG members continue to undertake a tremendous range of conservation activities.

In the past three decades, FOG has become the leading advocate for conservation of grassy ecosystems in the ACT and NSW. Our collaboration with government agencies in the ACT and NSW has provided advice and knowledge and has supported strategic approaches for better conservation of grassy ecosystems. Our on-ground work has grown in ambition and we have moved from an approach of maintaining remnants to one of trialling innovative conservation solutions. We play a key role in raising public awareness and being the voice for grassy ecosystems.

Further in this annual report, you can read about the excellent work FOG undertook in 2024 advocating for grasslands conservation and communicating opportunities through our newsletter, website and events. Our activities with site visits, on-ground work on key grassy ecosystem sites and supported projects have helped conserve grasslands. Importantly, in 2024 FOG led work to embed the concept of a biodiversity network of lands conserved across tenures in ACT Government programs.

The past year has been one of trials and tribulations for conservation of grassy ecosystems. Commonwealth environmental law reform stalled, and key grassland sites at Lawson North and at Canberra Airport are in jeopardy from developments. The Canberra Grassland Earless Dragon is in imminent danger as the Capital Airport Group began building a road around the north end of Canberra Airport that would bisect the largest remaining area – 340 hectares – of critically endangered Natural Temperate Grassland habitat left in the ACT. The Commonwealth Nature Repair Market has been established but as yet has no approved method that would aid conservation of natural temperate grasslands on privately managed lands.

In the ACT, 2024 saw the government adopt, at FOG's urging, a number of positive measures, such as the Biodiversity Sensitive Urban Design Guide to reduce impacts of developments, and commitments to a biodiversity network. As ever the challenge has been to translate good intentions to meaningful conservation on the ground. Unfortunately, countervailing initiatives threatened to diminish conservation outcomes, such as the hamfisted Urban Forest Act regulations that give excessive protection to environmental weed trees. Further, ongoing funding for biosecurity is in peril, while the ACT Natural Resources Management program's work with Commonwealth funding to enhance grassy ecosystems conservation over the next five years is an all too rare example of new, additional action. The imminent merger of the ACT Government's City Services and Environment directorates may provide opportunities to improve conservation of grassy ecosystems across land tenures.

In 2024, FOG sought to increase our focus on conservation in NSW. We held our 'Conserving grasslands of the South Eastern Highlands (SEH) of NSW' workshop on 31st May 2024 which collated information on conservation programs; identified gaps and lessons; and determined priorities and opportunities for collaboration for conservation of Natural Temperate Grassland (NTG). We focussed on "what enhanced cross-tenure conservation initiatives are needed to better conserve adequate areas of NTG in the SEH, and to sustain populations of and habitat for threatened grassland species?" Our workshop brought together over 50 enthusiastic participants from NSW and federal government agencies, landholders, researchers and community organisations.

In 2025 FOG intends to follow up with new initiatives drawing on our Gift Fund to improve ecological information and conserve key sites in NSW. Further, FOG is following up planned reforms to the NSW

Biodiversity Conservation Act to better conserve grassy ecosystems. In welcome news, in the Alps, the NSW Government has significantly reduced the number of feral horses, enabling recovery of alpine grassland communities to begin.

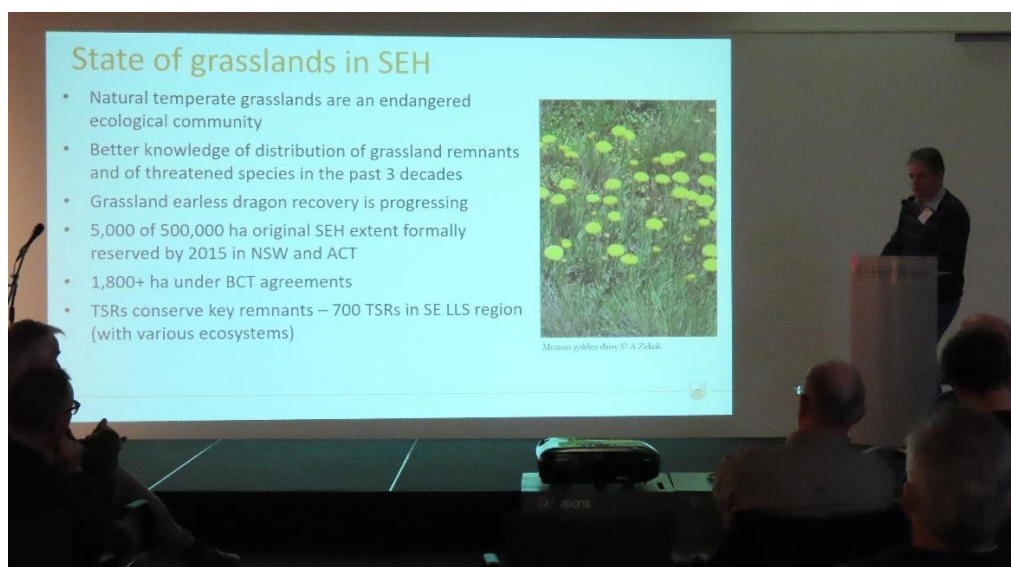
Our organisation has been blessed with an excellent Committee whose members have applied their diverse skills and interests to enhance FOG's work. I particularly want to thank Committee members who have or are about to step down from key roles. Hugh Coppell and Trevor Preston have stepped down from the Committee following interstate moves. Hugh made a big contribution representing FOG on important government advisory committees. Helen Sims is stepping down after several years as Secretary, where she has excelled in keeping FOG administration on track. Sarah Sharp is stepping down as Vice President after many years contributing greatly to FOG's advocacy and representations on government advisory committees. In particular, Sarah conceptualized and then championed the development of a biodiversity network in the ACT and its implementation. Many other volunteers have led key on-ground conservation, excursions, website and newsletter production that have contributed greatly to FOG's successes.

Further, Heather Sweet is stepping down as Membership Officer after a sterling performance. She took the opportunity to become a Participating Observer after May2024 when the Committee adopted a policy to allow FOG members to be invited to participate in its meetings. This is on either a standing arrangement or where contributions from others with particular skill sets (from within FOG or beyond) may assist in discussion of agenda items or issues. This provides possibilities for other FOG members to participate in the functioning of the Committee, as well as opportunities for capitalising on knowledge and skills that exist beyond the Committee.

I encourage any FOG member interested in contributing more to join the Committee or to take on one of the other modest but enjoyable activities that make FOG so vibrant and effective. Please call me if you would like to discuss options to help more (m. 0407 265 131).

Please enhance your support for FOG in 2025 with membership, participation in events, labour and donations for the conservation of grassy ecosystems.

Jamie Pittock, President



Jamie summing up at FOG's 'Conserving grasslands of the South Eastern Highlands (SEH) of NSW' workshop held at St Mark's Chapel, Barton ACT, May 2024. Photo – Andrew Zelnik

Advocacy - *Matt Whitting, Sarah Sharp*

The advocacy group made a total of 21 submissions this year, including six joint submissions with the Conservation Council ACT Region. In addition, FOG undertook advocacy activities with both ACT and Commonwealth ministers and worked cooperatively with other community groups to pursue improved conservation outcomes.

Members of the advocacy group represented FOG at numerous stakeholder meetings, engaging with the ACT Government, the National Capital Authority, NSW Land and Local Services (LLS) and other land managers and groups including the ACT Farmers Association, Catchment Management Groups and urban lessees.

In mid-year, Hugh Coppell moved to WA and Matt Whitting joined Sarah Sharp as the new co-convenor of FOG's advocacy activities. We thank you Hugh for your work and wish you well in your new endeavours.

2024 was a particularly busy year at the Federal level with comment invited on numerous documents related to protected and conserved area policy, and to the enactment of the *Nature Repair Act 2023*. All these documents establish the policy and regulatory environment within which grassy ecosystem conservation is occurring.

At the ACT level, a major piece of advocacy work was triggered when the ACT Government invited comment on its *Ten Year Review of the Nature Conservation Act 2014* ([here](#)). FOG contributed to the preparation of a comprehensive paper submitted by the Conservation Council ACT Region ([here](#)) and prepared its own submission focussing on matters related to grassy ecosystem conservation ([here](#)).

Cooperation with the Council continued after the ACT Government's Nature Conservation Policy Team (within Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD)) asked a limited group of stakeholders, including FOG, in September 2024, for comment on early thinking as EPSDD began developing the next ACT Nature Conservation Strategy. Continuation of our input on this strategy is a priority for 2025.

FOG aims for conservation of grassy ecosystems through proactive advocacy. Necessarily, we must also respond to proposals made by governments and developers as well. Key advocacy matters are summarised below. Copies of all FOG's submissions are available on the website.

Proactive Advocacy

ACT Election Priorities 2024

In August, FOG published its [priorities](#) in advance of the ACT election. Within the context of implementing the Biodiversity Network, FOG's emphasis was on the longer-term priorities to strategically improve conservation of grassy ecosystems, while deconflicting broader development decisions in Canberra. We argued that implementing these priorities can better support the wellbeing of the Canberra community by improving the quality of the environment, reducing costs to the community and identifying and conserving lands of high conservation value to steer development to uncontroversial lands where development may be expedited.

Biodiversity Network

The Conservation Council of the ACT and Region and Friends of Grasslands are continuing to work together to advocate the implementation in full of the [Biodiversity Network](#). During 2023 and 2024 every opportunity has been taken to promote the network. The concept has been favourably met, and many

moves by government and the Legislative Assembly are likely to facilitate implementation of the network in terms of protection and management. We are optimistic that the network will be achieved. Achievements over 2024 include:

- Inclusion of the Biodiversity Network in early drafts of Nature Conservation Strategy.
- Recognition of the term 'Biodiversity Network'.
- Amalgamation of all public land managers into one unit.
- Near completion of survey of off-reserve conservation areas.
- Discussions about conservation options for leased conservation areas.

FOG and the Conservation Council will continue to work with all stakeholders to support the implementation of the Biodiversity Network.

Invasive weeds

The advocacy group raised concerns about several species that have become particularly abundant in the last three years of above average rainfall conditions; we sought ACT Government agreement to mitigate against the invasion and spread of sleeper weeds (emerging weeds). As a result, the ACT Government agreed to remove some species from their planting lists.

Selected responses to consultations

Review of the Eastern Grey Kangaroo - Controlled Native Species Management Plan

Kangaroo management is clearly an important part of overall management of grassy ecosystems. FOG called for the management of kangaroos to be planned across landscapes, considering the herbage mass that they take off, as a part of an overall plan of management of all values, including biodiversity, rural production, maintenance of infrastructure etc. All landholders should be involved to determine the major elements in that landscape that are to be managed for, and the role of kangaroos in achieving those outcomes. We called for improvement in the condition and connectivity of vegetated corridors to enable the movement of native fauna, including kangaroos.

Update of Australia's Strategy for Nature 2019-2030

This Strategy, established in 2019, was revised in 2024 consistent with commitments made by Australia in 2022 to implement the Global Biodiversity Framework. As Australia's national biodiversity strategy and action plan, the strategy establishes high level targets for reversing decline and improving outcomes. FOG called for targets to be improved in three of the six 'priority areas'. For example, for the priority area *Tackling the impact of invasive species*, FOG called for greater ambition, noting that a focus only on "our most precious places" will guarantee ongoing biodiversity loss. We also noted the target's focus on preventing invasive species' introductions ignores their spread.

Ministers [agreed](#) to the national targets on 21 June 2024 and [Australia's Strategy for Nature 2024-2030](#) was published on 30 September 2024.

Draft National Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures Framework

After commenting on draft conserved area principles in April 2023, FOG was pleased to see comment invited ([here](#)) on the above Framework in March 2024. FOG took the opportunity to highlight work we have done with the Conservation Council on the [Biodiversity Network](#) as a means of protecting remnants of natural value not included in protected areas. We put the view "best practice conservation depends on protecting and managing all valuable remnants effectively, across all tenures, under a unified legal and management framework." In turn we criticised the Draft Framework's complexity and

unclear standards. We expressed disappointment at its failure to consider implementation and delivery arrangements.

Ministers subsequently [agreed](#) to the *National Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) Framework* (the Conserved Areas Framework) on 21 June 2024 and [the document](#) was published on 12 August 2024.

The Nature Repair Market

2024 was a very busy year for the policy agency, (DCCEEW) and the Clean Energy Regulator establishing the nature repair market. On 4 April 2024, FOG held a Forum to discuss this market ([here](#)). On 31 May, a paper was then presented at a FOG Workshop (see p. 60, [here](#)). FOG commented on a [discussion paper about the rules](#) ([here](#)), on [a draft](#) of the first ‘method’ by which applicants could be registered to carry out rehabilitation and restoration works as part of nature repair ‘biodiversity projects’ for periods of 25 or 100 years ([here](#)), and on [a draft](#) of the ‘Biodiversity Assessment Instrument’ by which gains toward the repair of nature will be measured ([here](#)).

The market commenced operation on 27 Feb 2025 after publication of the approved [Nature Repair \(Replanting Native Forest and Woodland Ecosystems\) Methodology Determination 2025](#) and the approved [Nature Repair \(Biodiversity Assessment\) Instrument 2025](#). For more information, start with the [DCCEEW’s](#) and/or the [Regulator’s](#) websites.

Lawson North grasslands

During 2024, Defence Housing Australia is presumed to have been working internally on an Environmental Impact Statement for their proposed development of 24 ha of the Lawson North grasslands. Throughout the period, FOG advocated for improved management to halt the deterioration in the condition of the grasslands. Input was provided to protect small areas of grassland within the South Lawson development area.



Jamie (centre right) talking about FOG’s concerns with Defence Housing Australia’s proposed residential development on Lawson North grasslands site (rear), Lawson ACT, September 2024. Photo – Andrew Zelnik

ACT Environment Budget 2024-25

In March 2024, FOG put forward a [submission](#) to inform the budget for the financial year 2024/25. FOG's proposal asked for:

1. Implementation of the biodiversity network:
 - Improvement in the quality of the environment in terms of protection and management
 - Improved community support through upgrading Urban Parks and Places volunteer support and providing secure funding Catchment Management Groups
2. Renewal and enhancement of the ACT biosecurity program
 - Undertake pilot programs to replace exotic grassland
 - Repair of public tracks and roads
3. Mapping of critical habitat for threatened species
4. Recommendation for further strategic environmental assessments in the Western Edge and Eastern Broadacre regions.

Participation on working groups in the ACT

FOG continues to maintain an active presence on several working groups in the ACT. These include the Conservation Council's Biodiversity Working Group, the ACT Government's Invasive Plants Working Group and the NRM Community Advisory Group. FOG is also a member of the Biodiversity Conservation Forum, which is co-chaired by the ACT Government, Conservation Council and Landcare ACT. In each of these working groups, FOG representatives advocate for greater protection and management of grassy ecosystems through collaborative initiatives. In addition, the advocacy group and other FOG members have made numerous formal and informal representations on behalf of FOG to politicians, government, the community and other stakeholders.

Communication –

News of Friends of Grasslands – *Paul Archer*

The bi-monthly 'News of Friends of Grasslands' is FOG's principal communication medium.

Since 1994 its articles have related how FOG and other agencies, groups and individuals support grassy ecosystems through on-ground work, research and advocacy. The January–February 2025 issue was the 172nd in the series. All issues are freely available and searchable on the FOG website.

As in previous years, articles, drawings, and photographs imparted well-researched information relevant to grassy ecosystems and respectful of First Nations' traditional land management practices. FOG's continuing advocacy was outlined, and submissions summarised. Regular articles covering the plants, insects and animals of grasslands and grassy woodlands added interest and variety while news items and reports of FOG's on-ground work and field visits kept members up to date and informed.

The May-June edition went to full electronic distribution following a review based on environmental considerations, postal and printing costs and the amount of volunteer time required to compile and send hard copy. The change appears to have been well received. However, a small number of members have opted to continue with printed copies.

Thank you to everybody involved: the editorial team (proofreading, editing and distribution); photographers and artists and of course the writers themselves who consistently come up with such interesting, informative and high-quality material.

Events and Notices - *Margaret Ning, Eleanor Galvin*

FOG's Events and Notices is our regular update on FOG's and others' upcoming events and other external notices that we are aware of. The text is prepared from information provided by event organisers and other sources and emailed out about once a month to everyone on the FOG email mailing list, including non-members. In 2024 ten Events and Notices were issued.

Special Bulletins - *Margaret Ning, Eleanor Galvin*

In 2024 four Special Bulletins were distributed. Topics in these all related to governance of FOG, specifically the AGM and proposed changes to FOG's Constitution, and a further General Meeting called in August to make two further minor changes to the Constitution. (More details below by Matt Whitting.)

Governance statements - *Matt Whitting*

Changes to FOG's Constitution were required due to legislative amendments to the Commonwealth's Income Tax Assessment Act governing charities and to the ACT's Associations Incorporation Act, including regulations. These came into effect on 1 January 2024 and 1 February 2024, respectively. Consequently, in February, members were advised via Special Release of proposed changes to the FOG Constitution to be considered at the upcoming AGM and were given the opportunity to comment. There followed the formal notice of the AGM and the formal notice of a special resolution to amend the Constitution. As well as conforming with legislative changes, the Committee also took the opportunity to suggest other 'cosmetic' changes to the Constitution, such as removing the Preamble and the specific objectives as too many expressions of the same or similar things were confusing our intent. Now, the Objectives in rule 2 stand alone.

A fourth Special Bulletin was published on 10 July 2024 giving notice for a short General Meeting on 3 August to coincide with the Mugga Mugga slide afternoon. Two further minor changes to the Constitution were subsequently effected: the number of 'ordinary members' that can serve on the committee was increased from six to nine (rule 38), and rules governing our management of both bank accounts were streamlined (rules 70-73)

FOG takes our obligations under these statutes seriously. This ensures we retain our status as a charity and that we operate well, consistent with contemporary practices across the not-for-profit sector.

Facebook report - *Rainer Rehwinkel*

The following are the metrics supplied by Meta on the FOG Facebook page for 2025, providing us a view of how we are engaging with our Facebook audience. This report compares our early 2025 figures with last year's when these are available. Note that Facebook seems to publish their statistics differently each year making it difficult to directly compare year to year on all items. Nevertheless, the figures below are sufficient to show how FOG's Facebook page is reaching its audience. As in previous years, Facebook posts performance reports for the FOG Facebook page on 28-day and 90-day intervals. This year's performance is summarised below:

Performance breakdowns

In 2025, the FOG facebook page had 1,136 followers (compared with 1032 followers in 2024); this is an increase of 104 on last year's figure.

In 2023, in the 28 days between 6 January and 2 February, our page had a reach of 1.6K post hits, with a total of 708 engagements (likes, comments, etc). In 2024, in the 28 days prior to 14 February, our page

had a reach of 823 (an increase of +3% over the last 28 days), 16 items of published content (+700% over the last 28 days, with no figures presented in 2023), no data for post hits in 2024 (this metric is no longer provided), and a total of 293 engagements (likes, comments, etc) (+44% over the last 28 days).

In 2025, in the last 28 days prior to 9 March, our page had 3,098 engagements (post hits, likes, comments, etc, an increase of 2,805 over last year), 46 items of published content (an increase of 30 over last year).

In 2023, in the 90 days between 5 November and 2 February, we had a reach of 4.4K post hits, with 2.1K engagements. In 2023 we had 761 engagements. **In 2024**, in the 90 days prior to 14 February, our page had a reach of 1.4K (+27% over the previous 90 days), 29 items of published content (-36%), and a total of 854 engagements (-25%).

In 2025, in the last 90 days prior to 9 March, our page had 11,469 engagements (post hits, likes, comments, etc, an increase of 10.615 over last year), 144 items of published content (an increase of 115 over last year).

Age and gender

Facebook supplies information about the age and gender breakdowns of our followers. Of the total, 67% are women and 33% are men. Age groups are as follows: 18-44 yo: 35.3%% and 45-54 yo: 23.3%. Facebook now breaks age groups above 55 yo (in contrast to last year), with 55-64: 19.2 % and 65 yo+: 23.2%.

Facebook further breaks our engagement down by countries. Once again it is not surprising that 99.4% (1K followers) are in Australia. Followers are in other countries, including the USA (0.6%, 6 followers), Indonesia (0.6%) and Cambodia (0.6%).

Regional breakdowns

And finally, there's a breakdown by cities and towns:

- Canberra (48.1%)
- Sydney (8.8%)
- Melbourne (5.3%)
- Queanbeyan (1.4%)

This report of the Facebook page's performance to the AGM shows returned values that provide a rich means of understanding how our Facebook page is faring, and thus, how we are engaging with the community via this medium.

Website - *Richard Bomford*

2024 was another smooth year for the FOG website. Most work involved keeping the calendar, newsletters, and advocacy pages up to date. The statistics package on the server computers recorded about 210,000 visits and 100 GB in downloads. Those numbers probably include automated 'visits' from web crawlers – programs including those that update the databases held by Google and other search engines – so they aren't the number of what we might refer to as 'visitors'. But probably the year-on-year figures have some bearing on whether the site is getting more or less visited: the number of visitors increased by about 80% and downloads by 25% in the last 12 months.

In December 2024, the brochure *Grasses: Habits and Habitats* was the most popular download (375 times), followed by the information page *What is a grassland?* (328) and the resources page, *How can I get help for grasslands?* (266), then Grasses of NSW and the FoG calendar. The Advocacy page was downloaded 169 times in December.

The fog.org.au domain is registered with OnlyDomains, the website is hosted by HostMetro in the USA, and FOG email services are provided faultlessly and free of charge by Google.

Book sales - Sarah Sharp **(booksales@fog.org.au)**

Sales have remained steady in the past four years. In 2024, 248 copies of *Woodland Flora* were sold. Sales of *Grassland Flora* increased in 2024, with 356 copies sold. ACT Landcare bought 150 copies for their educational program being funded from the NRM program. Other major purchasers were the National Botanic Gardens Botanical Bookshop, ACT's NRM team, Murrumbidgee Landcare and several smaller distributors or outlets.

FOG also distributes several other publications, *Field Guide to the Plants of the Molonglo Valley* and David Tongway's excellent publication, *Restoring Degraded Landscapes*.

The profit from the book sales in 2024 was \$2248.67. These profits go towards printing additional copies of the two field guides, and if applicable, funding education-focussed supported projects.

Another publication about Grasslands and FOG

For interest, Jenny Horsfield (ACT historian and author) published a book in 2024, *Our Grassy Landscapes. A celebration of the people who care for them*. She writes:

This book includes interviews with a number of remarkable people involved in Landcare and also with farmers, scientists and writers. The book does not claim to be an exhaustive survey of people involved in caring for our local landscape but is told from my own viewpoint, about people I have met, read about or been influenced by in some way and who have helped me to see this country with new eyes.

The book includes the story of Friends of Grasslands, and many of the very committed members of Friends of Grasslands and the grasslands community are represented as a part of that story.

The book can be purchased from the National Library Bookshop.

Events and Activities – Margaret Ning

FOG-initiated activities

I don't think we had any cancellations in 2024 due to the weather, although a couple were carried out during drizzle. We conducted 13 activities, which included only four that were out of town (if we include the Hall area as local). Attendance at activities continued to be relatively low. Activities in 2024 included:

January a ten-day Tassie trip, including to grassland sites in the Midlands, which included advocacy and learning opportunities

February Lawson North Revisited, a morning activity led by Rainer (my highlight: a cream-coloured eastern brown snake)

Morning visit to Hall Horse Paddocks to monitor horse damage (highlight: 21 grass spp)

March	Tinderry revisit led by Markus to different areas of the property, continuing to build the spp list
April	Bass Gardens' revisit to small hidden gem in suburbia Urambi Hills NR, the first of our St John's Wort (SJW) investigative visits
May	Mt Majura visit included a productive meeting on SJW, although our walk was rained out
June	Goulburn wetland & Gundry TSR day trip, (highlight: myriad <i>Keyacris scurra</i> , and very little SJW)
July	Parliament House Garden afternoon perimeter walk, led by Matt K (my highlight: Drumsticks (<i>Pycnosorus globosus</i>))
August	Mugga Mugga slide afternoon included presentations by John Fitz Gerald (Ginninderry update & poster), Jamie Pittock (conservation of grasslands of the South Eastern Highlands Workshop), Rainer Rehwinkel (South African grassy ecosystems), Andrew Zelnik (Tassie grasslands visit), Hugh Coppell & Sarah Hnatiuk (Invasive Plants Working Group, especially SJW news), followed by a general meeting
September	Hall Horse Paddocks, morning orchid walk led by local enthusiast, Christian (highlight, more <i>Keyacris scurra</i> !)
October	afternoon wander in the area of Kowen TSR (highlight: Dwarf Milkwort (<i>Polygala japonica</i>))
November	FOG's 30th birthday celebration at St Mark's, an afternoon with 47 attendees. Geoff Robertson's presentation on the first 20 years of FOG may be found here . Andrew Zelnik also prepared a slide show of FOG images from 2007 to 2024.

In addition to the above activities, Rainer, Andrew and I also made a couple of visits to prospective locations for future FOG activities, and compiled species lists while there.

Thank you to those who raised the idea for activities, and/or subsequently led them on the day. And, of course, all suggestions for future activities will be gratefully received. We are focussing to a certain extent on returning to sites where we have been previously, in order to see what the SJW story is.

Organised by other groups

FOG had a presence at the ACT Parkcare display at Jamison Centre from 6-8 Sept (with highlight visit by Jean Geue).

Rainer led a Festival of Nature event at Lawson in September; and

FOG welcomed a Landcare WELLSRING (women's only) group to Budjan Galindji in late November.

Talks, Presentations and Representations

On 4 April, FOG (Matt Whitting and Jamie Pittock) led a Forum on the Nature Repair Market, for interested members of the community, at the ANU's Fenner School.

On 31 May, FOG held a workshop in the St Mark's conference facility, Barton, *Conserving grasslands of the South Eastern Highlands of New South Wales* ([Summary](#))([Full Report](#)).

FOG@2XX - Andrew Zelnik

Between January and December 2024, Margaret Ning and Andrew Zelnik continued their regular bimonthly guest appearances on local community radio 2XX 98.3FM's Radio Landcare program. This one-hour program broadcast on Tuesday morning each week is hosted by Queanbeyan Landcare member, Tom Baker, and FOG member, Margaret Piper. It provides a summary of 'What's On 'in the local ACT and surrounding NSW Landcare/catchment management community and conducts interviews with a wide variety of guests including on-ground volunteers, coordinators, businesses, government and academics. During the hour, Margaret and Andrew: (a) address questions and issues principally regarding articles and news items published in the latest FOG Newsletter; (b) publicise FOG's activities calendar e.g. upcoming field trips and on-ground work parties; and (c) alert listeners to current key FOG-related advocacy matters, indicating how they can obtain more information and contribute e.g. most often directing them to the relevant Conservation Council ACT Region and/or FOG webpages.

On-ground work and projects

Budjan Galindji (Franklin) Grasslands Nature Reserve– Margaret Ning

In 2024, 19 FOG work parties were held in the 1.5ha pocket of grassland in the south-east corner of Budjan Galindji Nature Reserve. Twenty-one different volunteers attended the work parties, with an average of 6 volunteers each time.

The only plant discovery in the course of the year was Wild Sorghum which we subsequently found out was planted by the ranger a couple of years back. Our site has benefitted from the mows it received in late 2023 and early 2024 and is looking very impressive.



Matt Kent doing some targeted weed spraying in our pocket in the southeastern corner of Budjan Galindji NR at Franklin ACT, August 2024. In the background removal of the original spoil mound and other works under way at the southern entry as per the ACT Government's 2021 landscape plan. Photo – Andrew Zelnik

Our management strategy over 2024 has not changed from the previous years, and our major targets are generally sprayed or micro weeded. We also include some serious seedhead removal at appropriate times. After all, it is not much use spraying weeds in full flower when one knows that a proportion will go on to germinate, even though the plant has been sprayed and killed. On a good day, after a work party, we can measure our success by the number of bags of weeds we take away from the site.

We have finally started treating St John's Wort (SJW) in our pocket, and Matt Kent and I are systematically going over it with Starane, studiously taking care around two common pea species which are apparently susceptible to Starane.

Having become obsessed with the SJW takeover in our grasslands over the last three years, and in an attempt to determine how best to fight back, in March 2024, we set up half a dozen two metre square SJW investigative plots. We are looking at four chemical and two manual treatments, and we are already confident, after 12 months of monitoring the plots, that the results are obvious.

In 2024 we hosted some corporate volunteers who approach us every year looking for some volunteer work on the site.

Thank you to our regular participants and interstate FOG members, for their wonderful, valiant efforts throughout the year. We meet on the first and fourth Wednesdays of every month.



Work party in action near dam at the western edge of our pocket in the southeastern corner of Budjan Galindji NR at Franklin ACT, March 2024. Photo – Andrew Zelnik

Bush on the Boundary West Belconnen – *John Fitz Gerald*

The BoB committee met monthly in 2024, continuing a schedule of formal meetings alternating with presentations, general discussion or field visits. Once again, matters were raised from both the Conservation Corridor and the suburban areas. The application for a Riverside Park in the Corridor was refused by the planning agency of ACT Government. However, Ginninderry continues to plan the duplication of William Hovell Drive at the edge of Higgins and Holt - its application was conditionally accepted. At the ACT Landcare awards in May, the BoB committee was honoured to receive the Community Partnerships Landcare Award

Ginninderry Conservation Trust ‘scrape’ monitoring – *John Fitz Gerald*

The scrape area was approximately doubled in size by Greening Australia in June 2024. The new area is alongside the established revegetation and securely fenced to prevent cattle grazing. Due to a higher slope, it was fitted with more erosion control with coir ‘logs’ and jute matting. New transect lines and circular plot locations have been marked for monitoring planned to start in 2025. The established scrape was not monitored in 2024 in line with analysis showing that its vegetation has generally stabilised. FOG collaborated in two Trust-related activities for the scrape - one public walk “Growing a Grassland” during Landcare ACT’s Festival of Nature in October, and the Ginninderry Research Showcase in July - that event can be followed at ginninderry.com/research-hub.

Hall Cemetery - *John Fitz Gerald*

FOG ran four scheduled work events in the woodland around the Cemetery during 2024, plus one other event, for a total of 86 hours of effort by volunteers. The high-quality areas around the grassy woodland resulting from years of our volunteer effort were expanded a little through new efforts. FOG continues to discuss management with the Office of Nature Conservation and is hoping for an ecological burn by the Parks’ Fire Unit in part of the woodland where exotic grasses have come to dominate.

National Lands – *Jamie Pittock and John Fitz Gerald*

FOG leads volunteer efforts to conserve the high conservation value grassy ecosystems on national lands under an environmental care agreement (commenced in 2009) with the National Capital Authority. Our work is focussed on conserving the 23-hectare Yarramundi Reach grasslands and the 52-hectare Gurubung Dhaura (Stirling Park) grassy woodlands (and associated lands) in the ACT. In addition, FOG leads conservation of the 8-hectare Blue Gum Point urban park land contiguous to Gurubung Dhaura.

In 2024, FOG held 14 work parties on these lands attended by 129 volunteers contributing 373 hours of volunteer work. Since 2009, FOG has held 176 work parties attended by 2,256 volunteers contributing 8,826 hours of volunteer work.

Conservation at Yarramundi Reach has improved with control burning of a large part of the site to manage grass biomass, and this has facilitated needed weed control. An important trial has started at the site to try and replace dense patches of African Lovegrass with spraying, cropping with sterile Rye, and sowing with native grasses.

At Gurubung Dhaura, FOG has worked with the NCA to change areas being slashed to better control weeds and restore woodlands in other areas. Volunteer work has focussed on maintaining plantings and controlling Blue Periwinkle.

Work on the adjoining TCCS-managed Blue Gum Point should benefit from a FY24 ACT Environment Grant of \$29,185. Unfortunately, excessive new regulations under the ACT Urban Forests Act have

delayed major woody weed control. FOG follow-up weed spraying has taken advantage of a control burn at Blue Gum Point in May 2023 to reduce infestations of St John's Wort and weed grasses.

Old Cooma Common Grassland Reserve – Matt Kent

Cooma Landcare had a working bee on Old Cooma Common Grassland Reserve on 22 November 2024 with seven volunteers. The volunteers were tasked with hand weeding Verbascum, Wild Sage and Fleabane, as Snowy Monaro Regional Council employs contractors to target African Lovegrass, Serrated Tussock and St. John's Wort.

The focus area was on the southern side of the ridge, and the Landcare volunteers enjoyed the opportunity to see the variety of native wildflowers growing on the reserve, especially the Monaro Golden Daisy, that was putting on a lovely show.

Wild Oats are becoming more prevalent across the site.



Work party and flowering Monaro Golden Daisies at Cooma Landcare working bee on Old Cooma Common Grassland Reserve, Cooma NSW, November 2024. Photos – Matt Kent

'Scottsdale' Monitoring – Linda Spinaze

Annual monitoring of Scottsdale was on Thursday 21st November 2024 at Bush Heritage Australia (BHA)'s Scottsdale property near Bredbo from 8.30am.

The method of monitoring was the same as it has been for the past few years, so most of us were familiar with the process. Some of the sites were hard to find due to the kangaroos having knocked down the marking posts in the 12 months since we last monitored.

Species of interest seen during the day were a flowering Late Mauve Doubletail Orchid (*Diuris dendrobioides*), and also a couple of flowering Nodding Chocolate Lillies (*Arthropodium fimbriatum*) and threatened Silky Swainson-pea (*Swainsona sericea*). A mystery sedge turned out to be Common Fringe-sedge (*Fimbristylis dichotoma*), which ironically is not often seen by us.

Volunteers comprised Margaret Ning, Andrew Zelnik, Paul Jennings, Margaret Strong, Lisa Bradley, and Linda Spinaze who split into two groups. We were welcomed by Scottsdale field officer Kim Jarvis, and

new Bush Heritage ecologist Justin McCann. The weather was perfect, sunny but not hot, at least to begin with.

Morning tea and lunch were provided by Bush Heritage.

By the time both groups got back to the shed and wrapped up, it was close to 5.30pm. A very full day's work! We look forward to another excellent day at Scottsdale next year.

Top Hut Travelling Stock Reserve - Margaret Ning

Top Hut TSR, between Cooma and Adaminaby, is a 15ha high conservation value grassland on which FOG has had a five-year lease since July 2020.

In 2024, FOG held ten work parties at Top Hut, with an average of just under six volunteers each time, including a paid bush regen sprayer on three of those occasions. Plans for an ecological burn in the northern paddock finally came to fruition on 4 October 2024, and resulted in an amazing crop of thistles that has been preoccupying us ever since. However, we are essentially in control of all important weeds, although our punishment of Dandelions in the drainage lines is yet to be completed!



RFS-NPWS ecological burn areas in northern paddock of Top Hut TSR, Dry Plain NSW, early October 2024.

Photo – Andrew Zelnik

In late 2024 we held a two-day Top Hut work party, which was an interesting experience as the forecast was awful and we received 20mm on the first day. But fortunately, there were around 300 small Broom seedlings next to our campsite, so we cut and daubed our way through those, and squeezed in some roadside spraying between showers. The two-day work party allowed us to extend our working hours, and we were much more productive on the second day, which was totally sunny.

Our ongoing visits during the lease period have also resulted in a continual expansion of the flora and fauna list each year. We also made another couple of opportunistic Monaro Grassland Earless Dragon sightings in 2024, providing an important complement to the NSW Govt's annual monitoring surveys, and found other surprises under the monitoring tiles including a juvenile Copperhead snake.

Our Top Hut lease will formally finish on 30 June 2025. In future we shan't have to apply for a long-term grazing permit with its associated fees, although we shall formalise a management agreement with South East Local Land Services, likely a Reserve Use permit. We shall continue to visit the site to manage whatever is necessary, and to appreciate its biodiversity values and document them (principally via the NatureMapr citizen science platform).

A huge thank you to our volunteers and the generous donors to the FOG Gift Fund who nominated Top Hut to receive their donation. And an extremely grateful thank you to John and Narelle for allowing us to stay at their place prior to many of our work parties.

We would love to welcome you to this site, whether to see it at its peak in spring/summer, or to join our work parties. It is actually possible to do both!

FOG Supported Projects Sub-Committee report - *Andrew Zelnik*

In the early part of 2024, the FOG Committee decided to suspend the grassy ecosystem grants rounds for the time being. The program had started in 2017 and was overdue for a review. But Andrew Zelnik indicated that he would: (a) like to scale down and ultimately step back from his role as FSP Sub-Committee Coordinator which he had done since 2017; and (b) prefer to clear the substantial administrative backlog of grants acquittal work that had built up over the last few years, rather than taking on the additional administrative work that would be involved in running a 2024 grants round. The Committee discussed the workload involved in multiple small grants and was considering a shift towards identifying and funding emerging priorities. It took up both aspects of Andrew's request and formed a sub-group to assist with the acquittal work and to conduct a review and update of the FSP and its processes.

During 2024 seven grants were acquitted with associated articles published in the FOG Newsletter – two from 2021, two from 2022 and three from 2023. Thanks go to Maragret Ning and Sarah Sharp for assistance with this - Margaret Ning re STEP's grant (2021) and to Sarah re grants for Gunning District Landcare (2022) and the Grassy Plains Network (2023). In the pipeline are also acquittal related newsletter articles for up to another eight grants, ideally to be published over the coming year. At the end of December 2024 there were only three grant projects remaining with any substantive deliverables yet to be received for acquittal - one each for 2021, 2022, and 2023.

In terms of outstanding grant payments liability \$4,500 was paid from the Gift Fund (former Public Fund) for three 2023 grants. This only leaves one further payment of \$1,500, allocated for payment from the Gift Fund, for the 2022 grant project yet to be acquitted.

Finally, thank you to the following people: FOG Committee and selected members for their offers and assistance; to Helen Sims for her liaison and presentation of FSP progress reports at Committee meetings; and again to Paul Archer and the rest of the newsletter team for supporting and publishing grants newsletter articles.

At the end of 2024, the Committee had commenced identifying projects for FOG's Gift Fund support. (And a note of gratitude from the Committee to those previously involved, and especially to Andrew for his dedication to this program since its inception. He has expended a huge amount of time and energy on it.)



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