



News of Friends of Grasslands

Supporting native grassy ecosystems

March-April 2013

ISSN 1832-6315

Program - take the diary out now

TUES 19 MAR, 5.30 pm for 6.00 pm. **AGM at the Conservation Council, plus dinner.**

SUN 24 MAR, 9.00 am – 12.00 noon. **Stirling Park work party.** Register with jamie.pittock@fog.org.au.

THURS 4 APR, from 9.00 am. **Weed Bio Control Information Day at 'Scottsdale'.**

SAT 13 APRIL, 9.00 am – 12.00 noon. **Hall Cemetery working bee.** Register with andy.russell@fog.org.au.

FRI 19 - SUN 22 APRIL. **Capertee Valley campout.** Phone Janet Russell 02 6251 8949, or 0406 944 462.

SUN 28 APRIL, 9.00 am – 12.00 noon. **Stirling Park work party.** Register with jamie.pittock@fog.org.au.

See p. 2 for further details of each.

Photo: Plains-wanderer female in preferred open grassland habitat (Phil Maher). See Phil Maher's article on p. 9.



2013 Membership Renewal

A coloured dot on your newsletter means that we have not yet received your 2013 renewal.

Membership of Friends of Grasslands Inc. (\$20 individuals and families, \$5 students/concessions and \$50 corporate) may be renewed either by EFT to BSB 633 000, A/c 124770835 (please give your name in the reference/description); or by posting a cheque to P.O. Box 440, Jamison Centre, Macquarie 2614.

Only if your details have changed, mail or attach to an email the enclosed renewal form, also available at www.fog.org.au.

Please help our membership officer to process renewals by the end of March 2013.

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Coming FOG Events

Please register for FOG activities with the contact person. They can assist with directions, and possibly car pooling. By registering, you assist FOG to organise any catering and to provide other information you may need.

FOG AGM

Tuesday 19 March,

5.30 pm drinks for 6.00 pm meeting.

Conservation Council, 3 Childers Street, Acton.

All members are invited, also to dinner afterwards at a local restaurant. Please contact John Fitz Gerald john.fitzgerald@fog.org.au to book for dinner.

Members may introduce business items at our AGM. These must be lodged in writing, one week in advance, with FOG's secretary, and the member needs to attend the AGM to discuss their motion.

The agenda is on p. 3.

Stirling Park major work party

Sunday 24 March,

9.00 am – 12.00 noon.

Bring drinking water, sun and eye protection and sturdy footwear. A thermos of hot water for morning tea would also be useful. Please register with Jamie Pittock jamie.pittock@fog.org.au.

Weed Bio Control Information Day

Thursday 4 April

from 9.00 am

with Bary Sampson, biological control expert.

The morning and lunch are at *Scottsdale*, 4.4 km north of the Bredbo hotel and west of the Monaro Highway. The afternoon is at *Mt Oak*, 395 Billilingra Road, west of the Monaro Highway 9 km south of the Bredbo hotel, and biological control agents will be released.

Cost: \$5 donation to the Mt Oak Community Association, sponsor of this event, with assistance

from Bush Heritage, Kosciusko 2 Coast and FOG.

To book, email moca.secretary@gmail.com, or 'phone 03 5988 6529 ah.

Hall Cemetery working bee

Saturday 13 April,

9.00 am – 12.00 noon.

We will continue work on controlling briar, hawthorn, thistles and other weeds in the woodland. Morning tea will be supplied.

We also plan to beautify the area either side of the entrance gate within the fence line.

Please advise Andy Russell andy.russell@fog.org.au if you are able to join us.

Capertee Valley campout

Friday 19 – Sunday 22 April

Janet & Andy Russell will lead a camping trip into this prime bird-watching area west of the Blue Mountains and south-east of Rhylstone. They will arrange walks for Saturday 21 & Sunday 22 April.

It will be a camping only trip at a property with toilet facilities available. This trip is in the early stages of planning. The following links provide information about the Valley:

<http://www.tourism.lithgow.com/glendavis.html>
<http://www.hn.cma.nsw.gov.au/multiversions/4808/FileName/Capertee.pdf>

To register your interest, please 'phone Janet Russell on 02 6251 8949 or 0406 944 462.

Stirling Park local work party

Sunday 28 April,

9.00 am – 12.00 noon.

Bring drinking water, sun and eye protection and sturdy footwear. A thermos of hot water for morning tea would also be useful. Please register with Jamie Pittock jamie.pittock@fog.org.au.

Other Events

Plant identification for grassy ecosystems:

ANPC Workshop

Wednesday 13 - Thursday 14 March

Australian National Botanic Gardens, Clunies Ross St, Acton ACT.

This Australian Network for Plant Conservation workshop will describe the diversity and ecology of grassy ecosystems, and provide the skills and information to identify common grassland plants.

We will use some of the most commonly encountered plant groups, including grasses, eucalypts and daisies, to introduce the best identification resources (printed, on-line, and interactive).

You will also learn how to access the experts through the identification services of the major herbaria. Along the way, we will de-mystify identification keys, and reveal useful field characters.

The workshop is targeted at beginners, but will also enable those more experienced in plant identification to refresh their skills.

For more information, including the program and registration form, either visit http://anpc.asn.au/courses/TSR_Workshops/Canberra.html,

email anpc@anpc.asn.au,

or 'phone 02 6250 9509.

Registration closes 6 March 2013.

K2C Forum: Weeds and Corridors Workshop

Friday 15 March

10.15 am - 12.30 pm

Government Offices Queanbeyan

This partners' forum will focus on *Identifying and prioritising future weed threats in Australian biodiversity corridors*, a four-year project being undertaken by Bob Godfree (CSIRO). It aims to understand better the threats posed by weed species to land management and conservation in eastern Australian biodiversity corridors, especially K2C. The project is

supported by the federal Biodiversity Fund.

Bob will outline his approach and we will hear from public, not-for-profit, and private landowners about their strategies, techniques and major weed species.

The project seeks to identify species that may become more serious in each corridor region, as landscapes become more connected, and the climate changes.

To participate, please register with Lauren van Dyke facilitator@k2c.org.au or 0411 402 978.

Community planting at Scottsdale

Sunday 7 April

Come and plant a variety of native species to assist Greening Australia and Bush Heritage in the restoration of Box-Gum Grassy Woodland at *Scottsdale*, a Bush Heritage conservation reserve 45 minutes south of Canberra along the Monaro Highway.

A free BBQ lunch will be provided.

For further information, contact Greening Australia (02) 6253 3035 or admin@act.greeningaustralia.org.au.

FOG AGM Agenda

1. Attendance and apologies
2. Minutes of 2012 AGM
3. Matters arising out of these minutes
4. Treasurer's Report and Presentation of Audited Accounts
5. Reports from groups and projects, plus Conservation Council Biodiversity Working Group, Molongo BoB, Gungahlin BoB, and website (to be circulated)
6. President's Report (to be circulated)
7. Annual elections
 - a. Appointment of returning officer
 - b. Election of FOG President, Secretary, Treasurer and Committee
8. Appointment of Public Officer
9. Motions with notice

News Roundup

Yarrabin fire at Carlaminda

Margaret Ning

FOG members Coral and Max Talbot lost everything except their house, grain silo, stables and cattle at *Sunny Corner*, 20 km east-south-east of Cooma, in the Yarrabin fire at Carlaminda in January. Coral and Max have been active workers at the Old Cooma Common Grassland Reserve working bees. The fire did miss an area where koala scats were found recently.

Coral said that they 'were at a loss to know where to start but a cousin and a couple of friends rocked in to help and really got us focused then came members of the Car Club. Alan Burchel, the recycling man in Cooma, brought out skips as we needed them and took away the burnt metal without charge.

The Car Club arranged another working bee: Mark Jones came with his back hoe etc. and levelled the site of the 3 sheds and filled in the dip. Over 5 days we have had teams of volunteers from Blaze Aid, mostly retired people who are consistent and thorough workers, working 6 hours a day regardless of the heat pulling down fences. I can't speak highly enough of these wonderfully generous people. Their dry sense of humour makes us laugh a lot and when you laugh it is just not possible to feel bad.

We have found it interesting to watch the order of recovery. At first when all looked black or dehydrated came the raptors of all sorts. Now many of the other birds are back too. We have had about 3 inches of rain in about 5 different rain events so our paddocks are returning to green, some of the trees are sprouting new growth and I have noticed some of the False Indigo, Native Violets and Native Sage coming up where the ground is still black. Many of the trees have sprouted new growth. All of this is so encouraging we feel privileged to be Australian and live among such generous and warm people.'

FOG members wish them well for the regrowth and reforming of 'Sunny Corner'.

Photo below: Max, son-in-law Mark Blyton, and Coral surveying the three ex-sheds at *Sunny Corner* (Bindi Kinderman).



Koala surveys Jerangle-Numeralla area

3-5, 12-16 and 20-23 March

Cooma-Monaro Shire Council is producing a Plan of Management for koalas in the Shire.

Council, along with OEH and NPWS, is organising surveys on the above dates.

Volunteers are welcome. This is an exciting way to learn about this threatened species of our local grassy woodlands and open forests.

Geoff Robertson has been on surveys with Chris Allen and his team, and says that this is a great way to learn about our local koala populations, their different behaviours, how to find evidence of them, and contribute to their conservation.

For further information contact

Danny.Corcoran@environment.nsw.gov.au or
'phone 02 6450 5557.

News Roundup (con.)

Valley Ponds Wetland

John Fitz Gerald

TUES FEB 19 A small FOG group was shown around the new Valley Ponds wetland and grassland in Gungahlin by Edwina Robinson, Urban Waterways Coordinator for the ACT. Edwina shared her enthusiasm for this complex project intended to control and slow water flows from the Town Centre and surrounding houses and schools.

The remnant grassland on a rise above the wetland is being highlighted by subtle tracks and signage to inform the public about its natural values.

Edwina is keen to contact locals interested in helping with the establishment, management and maintenance of this area: Edwina.Robinson@act.gov.au.

Photo: Edwina Robinson (third from left), ACT Urban Waterways Coordinator, with FOG members (John Fitz Gerald).



Plains Wandering: new edition

The excellent book *Plains Wandering - Exploring the Grassy Plains of South-eastern Australia*, by Ian Lunt, Tim Barlow and James Ross, was first published in 1998 by the Victorian National Parks Association and the Trust for Nature (Victoria). It has now almost completely sold out.

The book is a valuable resource for anyone interested in our native grasslands, and the University of Melbourne, supported by the VNPA, Trust for Nature and the National Trust, has secured funding for a revised edition.

Adrian Marshall and Nick Williams would like to know what users would like to see in the revised edition. Please complete a simple survey at www.surveymonkey.com/s/plainswandering and help to ensure that the new edition meets the needs of as many readers and users as possible.

Adrian Marshall
Grasslands Project Officer
Department of Resource Management and Geography,
University of Melbourne, Burnley Campus,
500 Yarra Boulevard, Richmond VIC 3121.
'phone 03 9035 6826 0413 757 173.

Plant identification help/training needed

I am an ANU student planning to survey the Pinnacle Nature Reserve as part of the *Defeating the weed menace* project.

I would appreciate some help from one or more experienced FOG member/s to get me up to speed with identifying plant species in plots sampling the reserve.

Please contact me if you're able to help sometime this autumn and possibly spring: Katherina.Ng@gmail.com.

FOG Advocacy

Naarilla Hirsch

This report covers the last four extremely busy months.

Gungahlin

In October 2012, the community was consulted on the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed Moncrieff Residential Housing Estate. The EIS was available for comment in January. Over this period, FOG has been discussing with Government its Gungahlin Offset Approach and Strategic Assessment, and understood that Moncrieff was to be included in this strategic approach. Consequently, FOG expressed its disappointment in, and opposition to, this separate EIS for Moncrieff. In FOG's view, any development of Moncrieff (including resulting offset proposals) should be included as part of the North Gungahlin Strategic Environmental Assessment. In its initial submission, FOG had also drawn attention to issues raised previously, such as connection to other high value areas in Gungahlin and bushfire buffer zones being in the development footprint.

York Park, Barton

Two years ago a development affecting York Park was foreshadowed by a referral about an access road. In November 2012 the first stage of the development had been referred under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act. The main issue is that which occurred several years: shading of the Golden Sun Moth (GSM) habitat. The current proposal shades a third of the conservation area primarily in winter. FOG regards the York Park conservation area as iconic, and there has been ongoing scientific monitoring of the GSM at York Park over a long period. Although small, the site has remained viable and continues to support a GSM population.

FOG's view was that any proposed development that shades the conservation area should not be allowed. It should either be set back far enough or staggered so that the conservation area is not shaded at any time of the year. The initial decision on this has been made: it

is a controlled action requiring assessment and approval under the EPBC Act before development can proceed. However, an application for works approval for stage 1 has been lodged with the NCA and was released for public comment in December. In response, FOG reiterated its view that any development that shades the York Park conservation area in any way should not be allowed to proceed.

Mugga Lane

In December TAMS sought comment on its proposed extension to Mugga Lane landfill. FOG joined a tour of the existing facility and proposed offset site. FOG is in principle opposed to any development that impacts endangered Box-Gum Woodland, but recognised that this development may be necessary, because the existing landfill is expected to be full within a couple of years. As future expansion of the ACT's landfill facilities is likely to reduce natural heritage values, FOG supported the ACT Waste Management Strategy 2011-2025, in particular strategies to reduce waste and recover resources. A possible offset has been identified and its rehabilitation initiated. This is very pleasing as FOG has argued that offsets should be in place before development commences. The proposed offset block is lower altitude (so will add an ecosystem less well-represented), next to Isaacs Ridge Nature Reserve and provides bird habitat. As well as various construction mitigation and offset conditions, FOG pointed out that secure and long term funding for the offset is essential.

Another referral to the Commonwealth under the EPBC Act was a solar development at Mugga Lane, adjoining the landfill. FOG was sympathetic to the building of a solar power facility, but was concerned about the potential environmental impacts. FOG's view was that the area should be considered as part of the Box-Gum Woodland of which it is part, rather than in isolation. Habitat connectivity was of concern, as was the combined impact of this and the landfill proposal. A strategic approach to developments in the Mugga Lane/Jerrabomberra Valley area needs to be taken.

FOG Advocacy (con.)

Belconnen

In November, the National Capital Authority released a new draft Development Control Plan (DCP) for Belconnen Naval Transmitting Station. The changes to the previous DCP are in identifying areas that may be utilised as an Asset Protection Zone for bushfire protection activities. As FOG believes that bushfire buffer zones should be outside reserves and high quality conservation areas, it opposed the proposed changes.

Campbell, Section 5

The ACT's Land Development Agency proposes to continue with the development and (as required under the EPBC Act) to offer offsets for the destruction of the GSM population. FOG continues to oppose destruction of the Natural Temperate Grassland (NTG) and GSM sites, and argues that offset-requirement calculations must include the NTG patch as well as the GSM habitat. This is the first development proposal using the new Commonwealth EPBC offsets requirements and calculator that FOG has commented on. Five offsets were suggested. FOG's view was that further work is needed on offset options to determine which, if any, is suitable, and that offsets should be secured before any development commences. The offset amount proposed is based solely on the precedent of Forde North two years ago and seemed to FOG to be insufficient to prevent net loss to the environment. FOG proposed that offset moneys be placed in a dedicated trust fund for the rehabilitation and monitoring of the offset site, and that any surplus funds be returned to the developer.

Other areas

In November there was an EPBC referral for additional antennas at the Canberra Deep Space Communication Complex at Tidbinbilla, affecting a small area of Box-Gum Woodland that only just meets the EPBC criteria. Despite this, the proponent is proposing several mitigation measures which FOG has supported, in particular continuing weed management by CSIRO.

A Canberra Centenary Trail has been planned to

showcase Canberra and some of its hidden treasures. It goes through a number of high quality Nature Reserves and will require construction of new track in endangered Box-Gum Woodland. In December a referral was made to the Commonwealth under the EPBC Act. FOG was concerned that the proposed Trail could degrade some of those treasures and thought that, at the very least, the Trail should be confined to existing tracks through high-conservation-value nature reserves. The primary objective under the Territory Plan for Nature Reserves such as Mulligans Flat is to protect biodiversity. Recreation is a secondary objective. As well, improved consideration should be given to potential long-term impacts on endangered grassy ecosystems, such as inappropriate use by dog owners and trail bikes, and passive spread of weeds. The Trail has since been approved by the Commonwealth, with conditions about minimising impacts on GSM, Pink-tailed Worm Lizard, and Hoary Sunray *Leucochrysum albicans* var. *tricolor*.

Legislation

In October, FOG commented on the ACT Environmental Protection Act 1997. In general, FOG was concerned about two aspects: the applicability of the Act to our current understanding of biodiversity, and problems with enforcement. For example, FOG's view was that the Act should include conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity, and integrated environmental management, as in other jurisdictions such as Victoria. The objectives of the Act should include enforcement and accountability, without which environmental damage continues to occur, irrespective of legislation. FOG also supported broadening the scope of environmental harm offenses to include those with potential to cause harm, and raised the question of whether a "threatening process" should be included under the definition of "environmental harm".

FOG has commented on two inquiries by the Senate Environment and Communications Committees: one into the effectiveness of the protection of threatened species and ecological communities, and the other into an amendment to the EPBC Act. As such submissions

FOG Advocacy (con.)

are confidential Committee documents protected by Parliamentary Privilege, they are not on the FOG website, but will be publicised via the Committees' websites.

Strategies

In December the ACT Government sought comment on its draft Nature Conservation Strategy. FOG was disappointed in the Strategy. Little of it was new or innovative and, in FOG's view, it will do little to guide and direct effective programs to conserve biodiversity. FOG supported the five strategies proposed and the broad actions identified to achieve the vision and long-term outcomes. However, FOG believes that the draft Strategy is general and largely aspirational, lacking detail on how the strategies are to be achieved. Its targets are broad, lacking clarity as to how the actions will occur and how success will be measured. In contrast, the 1998 Nature Conservation Strategy, which this document will replace, identified specific objectives, actions to achieve those objectives and performance indicators or targets to measure whether the objectives and actions have been met. FOG supported the focus on a landscape approach and the recognition of the nature reserves as a backbone for conservation. On the other hand, it was critical of a number of other aspects, such as the lack of context, the role of offsets to achieve no net loss, and the lack of indication of how the ACT Government will work with others to manage those significant grasslands and woodlands outside reserves.

Greening Australia has released a draft strategy for Greater Goorooyarroo. FOG strongly supported this, as it covers the areas FOG considers important. We hope to attend a meeting on the final version and to understand better how FOG may contribute to this important Box-Gum Woodland project.

FOG submissions are on our website.

Nature Conservation Trust seeks suitable properties

The Nature Conservation Trust of NSW works to protect the unique natural heritage of NSW by supporting landowners to look after their land, and by buying, selling and protecting properties. Together with landholders the NCT is creating a network of protected private nature reserves across NSW.

The Revolving Fund of the NCT acquires private lands of high conservation value, protects that value with a conservation covenant in perpetuity, sells the property to purchasers who are conservation-minded, and uses the proceeds to make further acquisitions.

The NCT purchases only properties of high conservation value. These may support a high diversity of species; threatened or poorly protected animals, plants, or ecological communities; the last remaining patch of intact bushland in an area; part of an important wildlife corridor; or act as a buffer to protect a neighbouring national park, nature reserve, or indigenous protected area.

Properties should appeal to the private real estate market. They should have well-formed legal access, building entitlements, boundary fencing in good condition (except where a property borders National Park or other protected areas), minimal requirements for capital expenditure (dwelling and infrastructure, if present, in good condition), be located in an area of compatible land use, and have minimal weeds.

This financial year, the NCT is looking to purchase a mixed portfolio of conservation properties in the area bounded approximately by Port Stephens, Bathurst, Wagga Wagga, and Bega. It is interested in large conservation properties (e.g. greater than 500 ha and ideally greater than 2000 ha), large properties that contain a mix of conservation and agriculture, and also smaller 'lifestyle' properties (e.g. between 100-500 ha in size), preferably located closer to population centres, and which have conservation attributes.

If you know of any properties that you think may be suitable please fill out an *Expression of Interest* form available on the NCT website at www.nct.org.au

For any queries, please contact Adam Dawson on (02) 6626 0303.

Plains-wanderers and Grazing in National Parks

Philip Maher, Deniliquin. Australian Ornithological Services P.L.

This was first published in the online discussion forum birding-aus, of 2 Dec 2012. It was provoked by newspaper headlines about National Parks allowing sheep grazing in parks to encourage Plains-wanderers to remain there.

I haven't had time to follow the Plains-wanderer and land management thread on *birding-aus* closely but think I have the general drift. Richard Nowotny kindly asked for my perspective.

I have little idea about current management at Terrick Terrick or Oolambeyan National Parks, although I surveyed and located Plains-wanderers there in the 1990s and recommended the purchase of these properties by the state. Terrick Terrick and surrounding reserves would otherwise probably now be wheat fields.

The article in the *Weekly Times* (and the *Deniliquin Pastoral Times* the following week) is about a few landowners enjoying their 'told-you-so' moment but not having a grasp of the bigger picture with Plains-wanderers. Tying it in with the cattle in the high country issue was overreaching somewhat. Having said that, seeking advice from landowners and Plains-wanderer experts occasionally should be in Parks' armoury.

The best land management in the world would not have made a skerrick of difference to the dire situation that Plains-wanderers are in. The overriding factor has been the weather. From 2001 to 2010 we had drought or near drought conditions, which rendered most of the Hay Plain too bare for Plains-wanderers. They retreated to ever diminishing areas that still had cover. They continued to breed, but in greatly reduced numbers. Then we had the drought-breaking rains of late winter 2010 after which the cover re-established and by October 2010 Plains-wanderers had returned, and commenced breeding like crazy in their old haunts. Over about two weeks in November 2010 we located six nests in one paddock, by far the most located in a single year. This was their big chance to get their numbers up, but it was not to be. Another deluge flooded all the nests. This was the pattern for the remainder of that summer, with chicks or nests with eggs repeatedly flooded. A few young possibly survived in late summer and autumn. By the end of the 2010/11 summer, the native grasses were so thick in areas usually inhabited by Plains-wanderers that many of the

birds disappeared, presumably looking for somewhere drier and barer. We started spotlighting Buff-banded Rail and Brown Quail in paddocks normally inhabited by Plains-wanderers. The few remaining Plains-wanderers retreated to the barest areas. The rains ceased in autumn/winter and we were expecting Plains-wanderers to resume breeding but nothing happened. (Over the last 32 years, we've recorded them breeding in every month of the year). In spring 2011, the rains started again, although not as much fell as in 2010. Strangely, although the remaining Plains-wanderers were paired up, they seemed disinclined to breed: perhaps the food supply wasn't conducive, or they may have still been knackered from the previous season's exertions. Towards the end of the last summer some breeding occurred as the odd juvenile was recorded.

About 5 " (125 mm) of rain fell early March 2012, and again flooded Plains-wanderers out. After this we went into one of the driest winter/springs in living memory.

Plains-wanderers had been paired since about August 2012 but the spring seemed too dry for them to breed, odd for a bird that prefers average or below average rainfall. Unless they breed soon, this will be the third season with little to no breeding following limited success during the drought. The rainfall has now become very erratic. Winter rainfall, once the most reliable in the Riverina, has all but disappeared over the last 15 years. The survival of Plains-wanderers seems entirely dependent on the weather returning to normal.

In our area of the southern Riverina, many of the passerines and some of the non-passerines now breed in winter, having become more opportunistic like true desert species. No amount of grazing by sheep could have constrained vegetation growth over the last two summers. Sheep numbers in 2010 were very low following nine years of drought. From where were all these sheep going to materialise?

Very low numbers of Plains-wanderers, in national parks or on private, well-grazed properties, are a result of extreme weather events. Simple as that.

FYI, all our Plains-wanderer sightings are on the *Latest News* page of www.philipmaher.com. The *weekend checklist* documents the last ten years of spring/summer sightings.

Golden Sun Moth Translocation Studies

Dr William Sea, Institute for Applied Ecology, University of Canberra

As part of a development offset under the EPBC Act at Forde, Canberra, the Institute for Applied Ecology at the University of Canberra (UC) secured funding to investigate methods for translocating the critically endangered Golden Sun Moth (GSM). The research program in particular investigated the habitat conditions required for larval growth, survival and moth emergence.

The translocation trial commenced in March 2011. One hundred larvae were collected from the field at Macgregor West, Canberra by digging up grass tussocks and sorting through the soil.

Larvae were then transported to a UC glasshouse, photographed, weighed and placed in individual large square pots containing mature tussocks of either Chilean Needlegrass *Nassella neesiana* or Tall Speargrass *Austrostipa bigeniculata* tussock.

Half of the pots were placed outside the glasshouse to see if the glasshouse had any effect on larvae survival and emergence. The glasshouse operates at different temperature and light regimes to field conditions. Growth and survival of larvae were assessed over the course of the project along with any emergence of adults.

Based on the results of the first phase of the study, additional funds have been secured from the ACT Government to study the translocation of GSM to a suitable field site where GSM have not previously been recorded. The success of this phase will require the harvesting of a substantially higher number of GSM larvae which are likely to pupate and then emerge as adults in the next flying season (November-December 2013). Extensive monitoring will be required during the flying season to examine emergence rates..

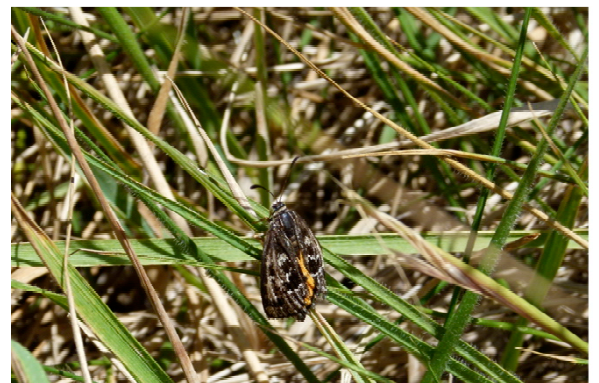
The study enthusiastically welcomes the participation of Friends of Grasslands members, for whom a tour of the UC facilities is being planned.

For more information on how you may contribute, please contact Dr. William Sea
Bill.Sea@canberra.edu.au.



Photos (William Sea): Outside pots containing Golden Sun Moth larvae (above).

A female Golden Sun Moth from a translocated larva in an outside pot on 19 December 2012 (below).



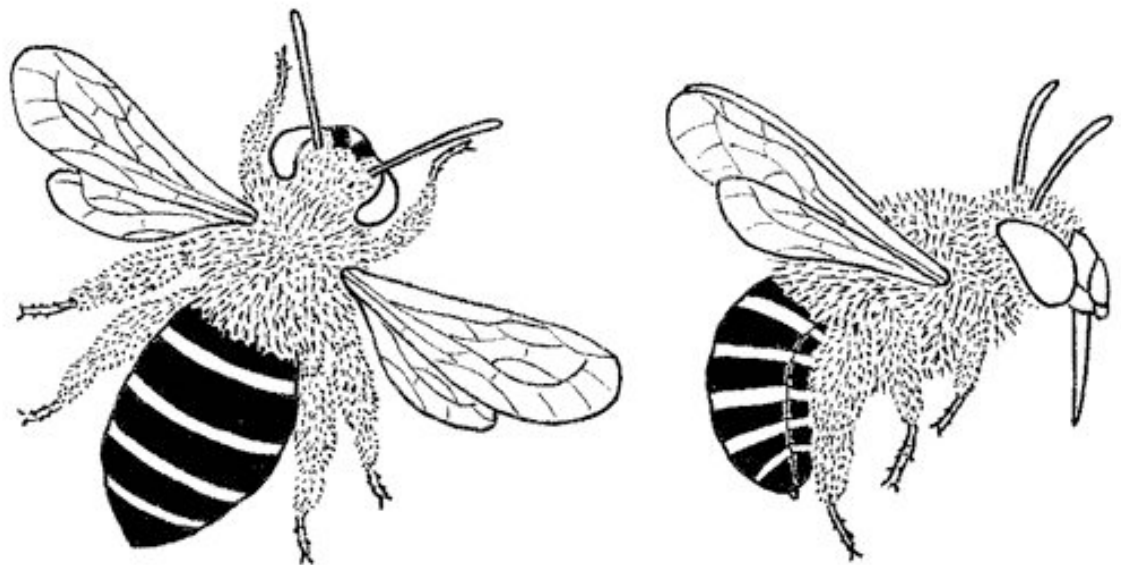
The Common Blue-banded Bee, a Cute Australian Native

Michael Bedingfield

When we think of bees, we usually think of the most common species around here, the European Honeybee *Apis mellifera*. But I have occasionally had other visitors to my garden, the blue banded bees. Out of curiosity I decided to find out more about them. It was a surprise to learn that there are over 1500 species of native bees in Australia, including about 25 species of blue banded bees!

The Blue-banded Bees, in the genus *Amegilla*, resemble the European Honeybee, except they have black and blue stripes instead of dark brown and yellow. The Common Blue-banded Bee *Amegilla cingulata* occurs throughout most of Australia, except for Tasmania and the NT, but also in PNG, Indonesia, East Timor and Malaysia. Their habitat varies from woodland, forest, and heath to urban areas. They are solitary. After mating, females make a nest in small tunnels burrowed into earthen banks, soft stone or mortar. They collect pollen and nectar for their young. It is common for their nests to be close to those of other females, creating a community of independent individuals. Males don't make nests, but cling to vegetation when resting, and they don't help with their offspring. This species is active only during the warmer months, and dies when cold weather arrives. Immature juveniles remain dormant in their nests during the cold months, and emerge the following spring. They have a typical insect body. It is composed of the head, with large multi-lensed eyes and a long "tongue" or proboscis; the reddish-brown thorax to which the legs are attached; and the abdomen, which is black with iridescent blue (or occasionally white) stripes. Adults grow to 12 mm long, with males having five blue stripes and females four. In flight they dart quickly between flowers, and are able to hover. They are not aggressive, though they can deliver a mild sting if grabbed or stepped on, and can sting more than once. Nearly all our native bees are solitary: only ten are "social" and they are also stingless.

By contrast, the European Honeybee is quite aggressive, and can give a painful sting. It is a social bee, with a queen in charge of a large colony, numerous female worker bees, and the male drones. It was introduced to Australia by the early colonialists, and it has moved from the hives to become a feral pest in the natural environment. Their effect on native species was not regarded as an issue until recently. Not enough is known, and their effect on



native flora and fauna is being researched. As a competitor with native bees, they may be impacting on their food sources and their populations. They may also be interfering with the pollination of some native plants. These bees are also recognised as a threat to native birds, as they create colonies in tree hollows, and fewer hollows are available for the birds. It is not unusual to see a Honeybee nest in a tree hollow in our region. In WA it is regarded as a serious problem, especially for some species of cockatoos, and measures have been introduced to combat feral bee populations. There is also serious concern for the impact of the introduced Asian Honeybee *Apis cerana* which has moved into Queensland in recent years.

This information was gleaned from aussiebee.com.au, australianmuseum.net.au, bluebandedbees.com, brisbaneinsects.com, daff.qld.gov.au, environment.gov.au, museum.wa.gov.au, repository.uwa.edu.au and Wikipedia.org. I have drawn the Common Blue-banded Bee, at about three times its size. There are lots of coloured images on the Internet. It is amazing what you find out when led by your curiosity. A Blue-banded Bee is quite different to the European Honeybee, and I would prefer it to visit my garden any day!

FOG groups and projects

General inquiries

Contact info@fog.org.au, Sarah Sharp (0402 576 412) or Janet Russell (6251 8949).

Activities organises FOG field trips, talks, workshops, on-ground works, support to other groups, property visits, and the FOG calendar. Inquiries: activities@fog.org.au.

Advocacy prepares submissions and advocates for grassy ecosystem issues. It holds occasional meetings and workshops. Inquiries: advocacy@fog.org.au.

Committee & correspondence The Committee organises, coordinates and monitors FOG activities. Members are John Fitz Gerald (Pres.), Sarah Sharp (Vice Pres.) Kris Nash (Sec.), Stephen Horn (Treas.), Kim Pullen, Naarilla Hirsch, Tony Lawson, Isobel Crawford, Margaret Ning, John Buckley, Andrew Zelnik and Evelyn Chia. Andy Russell is public officer. Inquiries/correspondence: committee@fog.org.au. Postal address: FOG, P.O. Box 440, Jamison Centre, Macquarie 2614.

Communication produces *News of Friends of Grasslands* and *FOG e-Bulletin*. Inquiries: isobel.crawford@fog.org.au (newsletter), and tony.lawson@fog.org.au (e-Bulletin).

Cultivation and Conservation encourages growing of local grasses and wild flowers to learn about their horticulture and ecology, and produces *Cultivation Corner*. Inquiries: janet2.russell@fog.org.au.

Financial matters, excluding membership, contact stephen.horn@fog.org.au.

FOG ANU Fenner School, with the National Capital Authority, holds regular working bees at Yarramundi Reach (grasslands) and Stirling Ridge (woodlands). Inquiries: jamie.pittock@fog.org.au.

Grassland Flora FOG is now responsible for sales of *Grassland Flora*. Inquiries: booksales@fog.org.au.

Grassland monitoring, Scottsdale holds monitoring days at the Bush Heritage property at Scottsdale. Inquiries: linda.spinaze@fog.org.au.

Hall Cemetery, with ACT Government, holds regular working bees to protect the leek orchid and generally restore the site. Inquiries: andy.russell@fog.org.au.

Media spokesperson Sarah Sharp (0402 576 412).

Membership and newsletter despatch. Newsletter despatch is the fourth Tuesday of Feb, Apr, June, Aug, Oct and Dec. To help, contact membership@fog.org.au.

Old Cooma Common (OCC) with Cooma Monaro Shire Council manages the OCC Grassland Reserve. Working bees are held twice yearly. Inquiries: margaret.ning@fog.org.au or david.eddy@fog.org.au.

Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park (STEP) FOG helped to establish STEP, a regional botanic gardens and recovery centre at Canberra's International Arboretum. It showcases local ecosystems, especially native grasses and forbs. Inquiries: limestone@grapevine.com.au.

Woodland Flora *Woodland Flora*, the sequel to the popular *Grassland Flora*, is now at advanced production stage. Inquiries: sarah.sharp@fog.org.au.

Website www.fog.org.au is full of FOG information, back issues of *News of Friends of Grasslands*, and program details. Inquiries: webmanager@fog.org.au.

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