News of Friends of Grasslands

Supporting native grassy ecosystems

ISSN 1832-6315

November & December 2026

Eight people have joined FOG since late August. **Welcome!!**

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Dragon fundraiser at Hall village
FOG activities and work parties
Articles about:
*A road though Wandiyali
*Canberra dragon: protect it
*Reviewing ALG management
*Longhorn beetles and others
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*Please help measure NTG
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*Earless dragon at Reptile Zoo
Reports: 4 FOG activities & w'kshop
Member's property for sale
Job advert, *Greening Australia*
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Backpage photo

FOG's Christmas gathering:
26 November 7.30pm
Badger & Co, ANU (see p.2)
Numbers are limited.
RSVP to Julia Raine
by c.o.b. 19 November.

Help needed, early November to record plant species at grassland restoration research sites previously burnt (image below) or mown (see p.10).
Phone 0429 606 788
ken.hodgkinson1@outlook.com



Conservation property for sale near Numeralla: page 17

Casual job at Greening Australia: page 17

Would you like to contribute to FOG's advocacy program?

Over the last few months, FOG has witnessed a sharp upturn in the area, in hectares, of Box-Gum Grassy Woodland proposed for clearance for renewable energy generation and transmission projects, quarries, gas-fired power stations and more. This is of particular concern in the north-east of our region, around Marulan and Big Hill. When we had the chance, our team of volunteers was too small to be able to express FOG's views on all the proposals. We have also lost opportunities to comment on important matters such as purported improvements to the NSW Biodiversity Assessment Method, and on draft regulations to be made under national environmental law.

We know there is more work coming. For example, we will have opportunities to make observations about native vegetation clearing changes in NSW, amendments to the *Nature Conservation Act 2014* in the ACT, and the massive Eastern Broadacre Strategic Assessment (EBSA) in East Canberra. The ACT Government has been working on its EBSA proposal since 2014. FOG has requested of the proponent that, when comment is invited on its many reports and thousands of pages of detail, the ACT community be given three months to respond, i.e. more than the statutory minimum of 28 calendar days.

If you would like to get involved in FOG's advocacy work, please get in contact with our Advocacy Convenor Matt Whitting at matt.whitting@fog.org.au

We would be thrilled if you would join us.

President's report

Protecting Canberra's last grassy ecosystems

Canberra's lowland valleys contain two of Australia's most endangered ecological communities: Natural Temperate Grassland (NTG) and Yellow Box-Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland (BGW).

Friends of Grasslands is stepping up its efforts to have the ACT and Commonwealth governments formally protect the nearly 2,800 hectares that remain outside reserves in the Territory.

Although more than half of the ACT is formally protected in reserves, the remaining high conservation value remnants of these grassy ecosystems are not adequately secured, particularly on lands favoured for urban development. A relatively small expansion of protected areas could largely resolve long-running conflicts between conservation and development while safeguarding biodiversity, ecosystem services and habitat for species such as the critically endangered Canberra Grassland Earless Dragon.

Our message for governments is straightforward: identify and secure the remaining high conservation value remnants before they are further degraded or lost. Friends of Grasslands has mapped the remaining unprotected priority areas on both Commonwealth (National) and ACT Government (Territory) land. On Territory Land, the unprotected remnants comprise less than 1,900 ha, yet their protection would

substantially complete the reserve system for these ecosystems and reduce future planning conflicts.

Current Protection Status of ACT Grassy Ecosystems

Ecosystem	Unprotected land (ha)			Protected and unprotected land (ha)		
	National	Territory	Total	National	Territory	Total
Grassland	513	370	884	513	1,263	1,777
Grassy woodland	353	1,521	1,873	353	6,973	7,326
Total	866	1,891	2,757	866	8,236	9,103

The urgency is underscored by recent losses. The Conservator of Flora and Fauna reports that between 2019 and 2023, approximately 17 ha of NTG and up to 667 ha of BGW were removed across the ACT. Both ecosystems are conservation-dependent and require active management, including weed control and biomass reduction through grazing, fire or slashing. Even short periods of neglect can result in ecological ruin.

Current protection status

Led by Sarah Sharp and supported by Matt Whitting and Matt Mullaney, Friends of Grasslands has just concluded our assessment of protection status in the ACT of the remaining high conservation value natural grassy ecosystems. This shows that nearly half the remaining grasslands and just over a quarter of the remaining grassy woodlands are not protected.

We note that ACT Government remote sensing and assessment of other values, such as corridors and threatened species habitats, may extend the area needed for conservation.

Conservation options

Friends of Grasslands is proposing that the ACT and Commonwealth government adopt a pragmatic mix of instruments rather than a single approach to conserve these two threatened ecological communities.

For Territory Land, we call for the designation of the nearly 1,900 hectares of remaining high conservation value remnants as Priority Conservation Areas (PCAs) under the forthcoming ACT Nature Conservation Strategy. These habitats should be progressively incorporated into Canberra Nature Park or through strengthened stewardship agreements with rural lessees. "Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures", also called Conserved Areas, could also be used where biodiversity outcomes are already being delivered through existing land management arrangements. Long-term funding is essential to ensure that management is effective.

For nearly 900 hectares of National Land, we ask for formal reservation of sites with no ongoing Commonwealth use, such as the Yarramundi Reach grasslands, through declaration as Commonwealth reserves under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. For sites where defence, airport or other government functions continue, they should be Conserved Areas that allow primary land uses to continue while enhancing conservation.

Our call is for the governments to identify and secure the small number of high-value biodiversity areas that remain, thereby providing greater certainty to pursue urban development elsewhere. By establishing a connected conservation management network across Territory and Commonwealth lands, Canberra can protect its remaining grasslands and grassy woodlands while reducing future planning conflicts and supporting recovery of nationally threatened species.

In coming weeks, we will be taking this call to government agencies and political leaders to seek their support for practical conservation.

See you in our grasslands.

Prof. Jamie Pittock,
President, FOG

Thursday 26 November – **FOG's Christmas gathering** will be an informal dinner (at own expense) 7.30 pm at Badger & Co, the new ANU pub (156/11 Pauline Griffin Health and Wellbeing Centre, Joplin Lane Kambri, ANU). The menu is at https://www.badgerandco.com.au/eat-drink.

Numbers are limited. ***RSVP by c.o.b. 19 November*** to julia.raine@fog.org.au.

ACTIVITIES INVOLVING FOG – visits, events and work parties coming up

Sunday 8 November – 9 am–2 pm. Hall village, ACT
An externally organised ***fundraiser in support of the Canberra Grassland Earless Dragon***, at Daughters at Hall café, 5 Victoria St in Hall village. Donations will go to FOG. Meet a 'dragon' impersonated by Matt Whitting and hear him being interviewed. See a ***real*** dragon (in company with some Corroboree frogs), courtesy of the Canberra Reptile Zoo at Gold Creek. Childrens' activities. Plant swap. Clothes swap. Donations can be in cash, or via QR code or direct deposits, with tax receipts for amounts of $2 or more.



Saturday 14 November – Travelling Stock Reserves near Goulburn, and Goulburn wetlands, led by Kim Farley, Margaret Ning and Rainer Rehwinkel. This is a joint excursion for FOG and COG ('Canberra Birds') to look for both wildflowers and birds.
Assemble at **9.30 am** at Belmore Park, Montague St, Goulburn (toilets and cafes nearby). *First stop*: **Souths TSR** at the intersection of Mountain Ash Rd & Kooringaroo Rd, east of Goulburn: floristically diverse open woodland and a chance to see woodland birds. *Second stop*: **Gundary TSR** on Windallema Rd, opposite the Goulburn Airport. Gundary has the largest population of Button Wrinklewort (endangered) and should have numerous other wildflowers. Be prepared to see snakes, and dress appropriately. Possible birds: Little Buttonquail, true quails, pipits, cisticolas and other grassland birds, birds of prey. *After lunch (at Belmore Park)*: **Goulburn Wetlands** (Lower Sterne St, entrance near Henry St), well known for its birds. These ponds and their surrounding native plantings were developed after community action. *Later, if time, along the Federal Hwy:* **Rowes Lagoon** has interesting birds, and **Collector TSR** on Breadablane Rd just north of the village has old-growth Snow Gums and a floristically rich groundlayer. Register with margaret.ning@fog.org.au

Thursday 26 November – FOG's Christmas gathering at 7.30 pm at Badger & Co, ANU. RSVP soon to julia.raine@fog.org.au.

Sunday 6 December – a wander in Red Hill Nature Reserve starting at 2 pm, with Dr Michael Mulvaney. This could be seen as an in-field follow-up to Michael's talk at this year's FOG 'talks and tea' at St Marks. Register with margaret.ning@fog.org.au

Sunday 31 January 2027 – Cooleman Ridge, Chapman, 'Grasses with a view', 9 am–noon. Linda Spinaze will lead a wander on the ridge, looking for as many different grasses as possible. Register with margaret.ning@fog.org.au

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Work parties coming up (*start at 9 am; end late morning*)

Register for work parties at least two days before the event so you can hear of any last-minute changes. Work includes weeding, planting, rubbish removal, and use of herbicides. Tools are provided. Wear gardening clothes (including hat) and suitable footwear. Bring your own drinking water. Morning tea may be provided. Events are cancelled if the weather is unsuitable or likely to be dangerous.

Gurubang Dhawura (Stirling Park, Yarralumla)
Saturdays: 21 November, 19 December.
Contact jamie.pittock@fog.org.au

Yarramundi Reach grassland
Saturday: 14 November. Contact john.fitzgerald@fog.org.au

Hall Cemetery woodland
Saturday: 7 November. Contact john.fitzgerald@fog.org.au

Budjan Galindji Grasslands (Franklin)
Wednesdays: 4 November, 25 November, 2 December, 23 December. Contact margaret.ning@fog.org.au

'Scottsdale', near Bredbo NSW
Wednesday: 11 November (usually all day starting early)
Contact linda@xamax.com.au

Articles

It's confirmed: A road is proposed through the protected Wandiyali Sanctuary

Matt Whitting

For more than a decade, Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council has debated building Dunns Creek Road, an arterial link from Old Cooma Road near Googong, NSW, to the intersection of Isabella Drive and the Monaro Highway in Gilmore in the ACT. This year its consultants, Stantec, assessed six possible routes and several upgrades to existing roads.

Three routes would cut through the Wandiyali–Environa Wildlife Sanctuary, 280 hectares of restored bushland, about 70 per cent of it critically endangered Box-Gum Grassy Woodland (BGGW). Friends of Grasslands and the Conservation Council ACT Region urged Council to rule out routes that would destroy any part of Wandiyali or any other protected area.

*FOG calls on the Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council to rule out this destruction **now**. That would end the needless uncertainty created, which devalues the hard work of all who have cared for this sanctuary for more than 25 years.*

On 21 October, Council rejected its own staff's advice to abandon Dunns Creek Road Stage 2. Instead, by eight votes to one, the Council endorsed "Option 5", a route through the Sanctuary. It dropped the five other new routes, including the only one that both avoids protected land and has estimated benefits exceeding its costs.

Wandiyali Sanctuary is of extraordinary value. The Sanctuary has recorded 21 threatened species, each protected behind a Commonwealth-funded predator-proof fence. It is land formally (legally) dedicated to conservation *in perpetuity*, protected by agreements registered on title under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (NSW). The Australian Wildlife Conservancy is a partner in the site's conservation.

The irony is stark. In 2017, Council obtained Commonwealth approval for its Ellerton Drive Extension on condition it permanently protect 50 hectares of Wandiyali's woodland and 20,500 of its endangered Hoary Sunray plants. Less than a decade later, Council wants to build a road through that very offset.

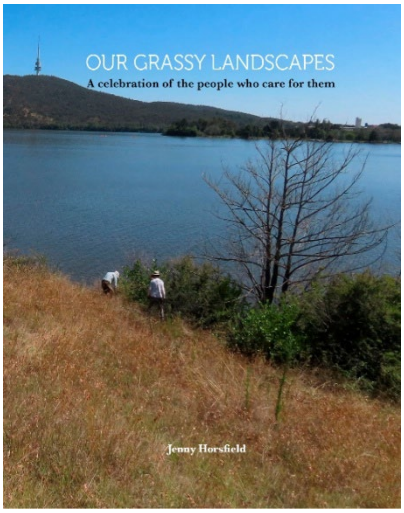
The Biodiversity Conservation Trust has objected, and the NSW Government has advised that development affecting this land is inconsistent with current policy. Yet Council will now commission a biodiversity assessment to justify the route.

FOG calls on the Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council to rule out this destruction **now**. That would end the needless uncertainty created, which devalues the hard work of all who have cared for this sanctuary for more than 25 years.

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1 https://wandiyalirestorationtrust.org/s/WandiyaliEnvirona-History-partnerships-projects-QPRC_30826l.pdf

FOG visits to Wandiyali are reported in News of FOG 2021-01 (Jan–Feb) pp. 12–13, and News of FOG 2023-05 (May–June) pp. 8–9.



Our Grassy Landscapes
by Canberra historian Jenny Horsfield

Jenny has surplus copies of her book for sale at $15 (rrp $40).

Our Grassy Landscapes is Jenny's eighth book. Charles Massey, who launched this book at the National Library in 2024, called it

> *a generous and well-researched book, that highlights the interesting, eclectic and big-hearted group of people who, like moths attracted to a light, seem to gather around our grassy ecosystems in the Southern Tablelands region.*

FOG members will be pleased to see that their own history (including the contributions of key FOG figures such as Geoff Robertson, Margaret Ning and Sarah Sharp) are a central feature of the book.

For enquiries or sales, email horsfieldj796@gmail.com; phone 0488 000 696.

Canberra Dragon: protect it now, and protect it properly

Matt Whitting

The ACT Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment's special report, *At a Crossroad: Extinction or Survival for Our Canberra Dragon*, was tabled on 24 September.[1] It grew out of FOG's complaint about Canberra Airport's Northern Road.

Of the report's seven recommendations, the Commissioner singles out one for immediate attention: protecting habitat areas and corridors for the Canberra Grassland Earless Dragon. "We cannot wait for long-term planning studies to be completed … The remaining habitat needs protection immediately." The report proposes pausing development applications in or next to known habitat until mapping is complete.



FOG and Conservation Council ACT Region drawing attention to potential destruction of Grassland Earless Dragons by building the North Canberra Airport Road (17 January 2025). Photo: Hedda M., Conservation Council ACT.

Independent experts who advised the Commissioner went further. Habitat protection and connectivity "must be treated as non-negotiable priorities, not factors to be traded against development outcomes or offset through financial contributions". Jerrabomberra Valley and the Poplars, home to the last viable populations, should be protected *in perpetuity*, and "urban development should not be permitted to go ahead in, or adjacent to, areas where [Canberra Dragons] have been recorded". The experts also recommend buying buffer land and removing the barrier created by the disused railway that separates the ACT and NSW populations.

I agree. The small area of land still occupied by wild Canberra Dragons should be securely protected, now.

The report recommends providing protection with planning controls; I'm concerned that may not be effective. The Conservation Council's recent *Illusion of Protection* report looked at two forms of planning controls, zoning and district strategies. They found neither function as effective safeguards for nature. It's doubtful 'conserved area' recognition will give the Canberra Dragon strong protection either. Unless conserved area recognition is supported by some additional form of actual legal protection, land managers can withdraw their commitment to manage conserved areas at any time.[2]

> "We cannot wait for long-term planning studies to be completed … The remaining habitat needs protection immediately."
>
> *ACT Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment*

What the Canberra Dragon needs is nature reserves that are securely protected under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014* (**Act**). As the Dunns Creek Road case (reported on the previous page of this newsletter) shows, even legally protected land can come under development pressure. Giving the Act primacy within reserves would help. Reserves should be declared through a clear, transparent process that makes them hard to revoke. With the ACT Government about to consult on changes to the Act, this is the moment.

Timing matters. The Eastern Broadacre Strategic Assessment encompasses a significant portion of the Canberra Dragon's remaining habitat. The ACT Government proposes to re-submit its draft assessment to the Commonwealth later in 2026; however, the second season of surveys, including habitat mapping for the Canberra Dragon, is only commencing this spring. Will those surveys clarify which land Canberra Dragons still occupy, and will the results be considered before the draft goes in? In my view, development surrounding the places where Canberra Dragons live would have a significant residual impact.

Canberra Dragons now live at the Canberra Reptile Zoo! see page 11.

[1] www.parliament.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/3138371/e50a1976b752ab5948e94af3b820c3ab363b0f96.pdf

[2] www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/national-oecm-framework-2024.pdf p. 16

Reviewing African Lovegrass management to help managers make informed management decisions

Paul O. Downey[1,2] *and Angela Calliess*[3]

African Lovegrass is a non-native perennial grass species that was introduced into Australia from southern Africa for use as a pasture species. It has subsequently escaped cultivation and invaded large areas of south-eastern Australia. In recent years it has expanded rapidly across the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), spreading from the south northwards.



Management of African Lovegrass has historically focused on pasture-production outcomes. Thus, many best-practice guidelines for managing the species focus on pasture production rather than on control of this highly invasive species within native ecosystems (e.g. Natural Temperate Grassland) and other non-agricultural systems, e.g. public open space and roadsides (photos A. Milligan).

Given that the current management of African Lovegrass was not seen as adequate to address the growing problem, especially in conservation areas, combined with increased public concern about the spread of the species across the ACT and surrounding region, the Ginninderry Conservation Trust commissioned a review of African Lovegrass management to help inform future management decisions.

This review examined the African Lovegrass literature with a focus on the management of the species, and aspects of the species' biology and ecology which might contribute to its management. The aim was to provide information to guide future management of the species, rather than to make a scientific literature review. Current and local management activities for African Lovegrass (including in the Ginninderry Conservation Corridor) were also reviewed, and that information has been combined with the outcomes of the broader management review to identify considerations for the species' future management.



African lovegrass seedheads can vary between growing sites and between the tall form of the grass (left) and the short form (right). Scale bar included. Image by John Fitz Gerald.

The review found that there was contradictory advice on the management of African Lovegrass, especially with regard to the use of fire, and that some management actions undertaken may actually be exacerbating the problem: for example, slashing or mowing the species when it is in seed. The review also concluded that there is no single management technique available to control African Lovegrass. Instead, a series of integrated approaches will be needed.

Given the scale of the African Lovegrass problem across the ACT, management must take a long-term approach, and target key areas and management actions to prevent the problem getting worse in the short term and protect threatened assets.



More broadly, the review's findings are initiating a rethink of the management of African Lovegrass by helping conservation land managers make more informed decisions and ultimately achieve better long-term management outcomes. The review will be available on the Ginninderry Conservation Trust's website (www.ginninderry.org/publications).

In addition to the review of African Lovegrass management, a risk assessment of African Lovegrass in the Ginninderry Conservation Corridor was undertaken to help prioritise management practices. The

management objective derived from the risk assessment was to focus on the protection of key assets within the Ginninderry Conservation Corridor in the first instance, specifically Natural Temperate Grassland and the Pink-tailed Worm Lizard population. An asset-protection plan for African Lovegrass in the Corridor is currently being drafted. This contains informed management decisions derived from the review, combined with recent African Lovegrass mapping, to provide a new framework for managing African Lovegrass across the Corridor for the next five years.

1. POD Consulting, Wamboin, NSW
2. Faculty of Science and Technology, University of Canberra, Canberra, ACT
3. Ginninderry Conservation Trust, The Link, 1 McClymont Way, Strathnairn ACT

Longhorn or Longicorn Beetles (family Cerambycidae), and the Common Eucalypt Longicorn

Michael Bedingfield

Longhorn Beetles don't have horns but get their name from the size of their antennae. They belong to the family Cerambycidae and are distinguished by their very long antennae that are often longer than their bodies. They are also known as longicorn beetles. Their bodies are oblong in shape and their antennae usually have eleven segments. Only a small number of species have short antennae. Some species have quite elaborate antennae, making them an interesting subject to study. An interesting feature of the adults is their kidney-shaped or notched compound eyes that wrap around the strong base of their antennae. The larvae are called round-headed borers and feed inside plants that may be living or dead. The most common food of adults is the pollen and nectar of plants.

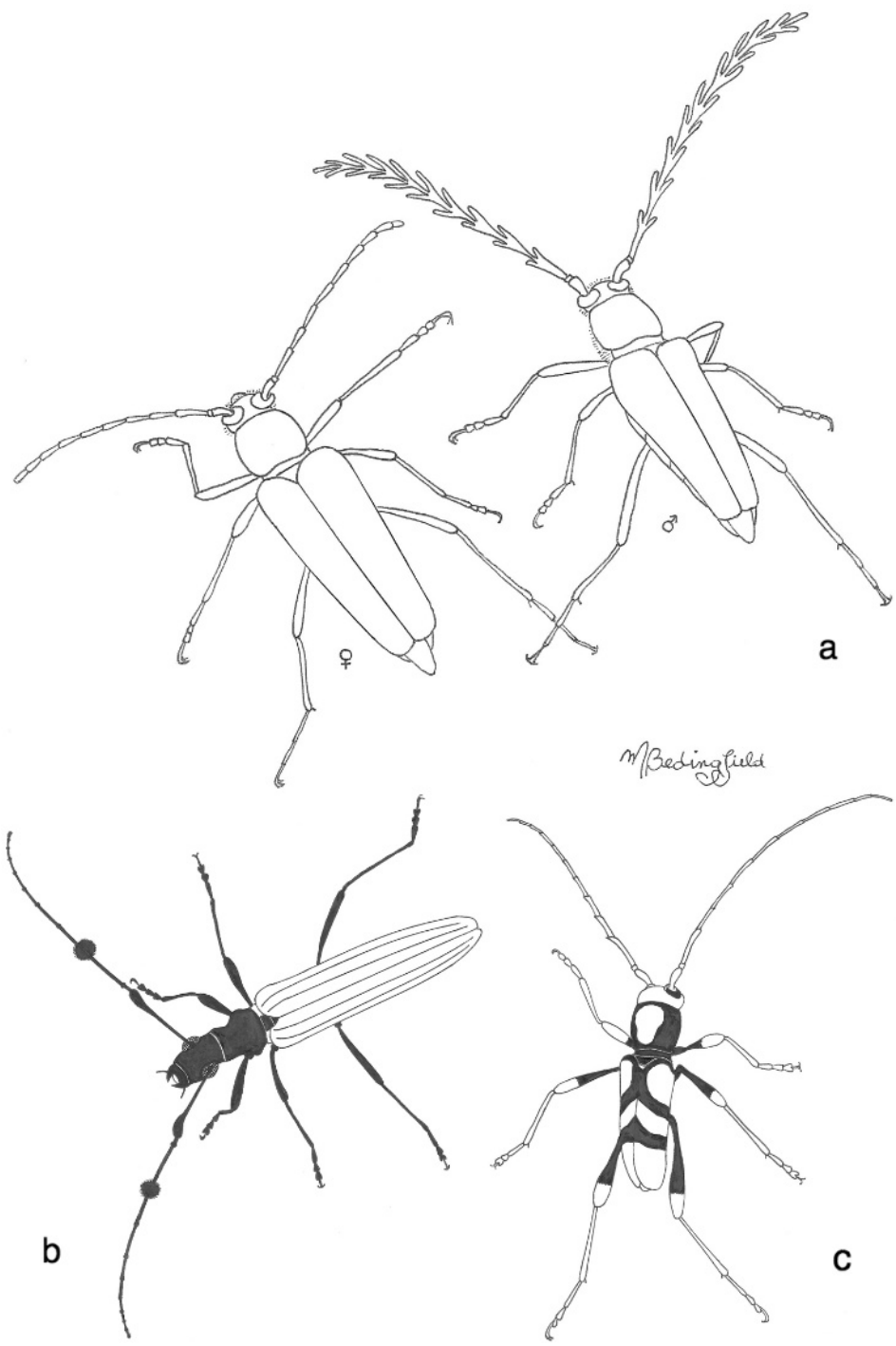


Photo: Michael Bedingfield.

There are over 35,000 described species of Longhorn Beetles worldwide, making them one of the largest beetle families. The Atlas of Living Australia (ALA) lists four subfamilies, Cerambycinae, Lamiinae, Prioninae and Spondylidinae and has long lists of the species. I shall describe a few species that I have found in the Canberra region. I have provided a coloured photo of the Common Eucalypt Longicorn, and black ink drawings for the others.

The Common Eucalypt Longicorn is a wood borer and goes by the scientific name *Phoracantha semipunctata*. As its name suggests it is common and widespread, occurring in all Australian states and territories. It has also spread overseas where Eucalypts have been introduced and there it is regarded as an invasive pest. It is not regarded as a major pest in Australia. Here the beetle and its Eucalypt hosts are in their natural habitat where native predators and parasites maintain the balance. It is dark brown and beige in colour and measures 15 mm to 30 mm in body length, with the female being a bit larger. The male's antennae are longer than its body, but the females' antennae are not so long. There is a zig-zag pattern in beige on their upper side, on the wing covers or elytra. In Australia the adults of these beetles seek out Eucalypts which have been severely damaged by natural causes and are decaying or have decaying branches. They also seek Eucalypts which are otherwise unhealthy. After mating, the female lays her eggs beneath loose or detached bark. When they have hatched, the larvae feed on the bark and external sapwood of the host tree. The larvae are legless, cylindrical, cream-coloured and have strong, dark-coloured mandibles for chewing through wood. When mature the larvae pupate, usually within the sapwood of the tree, and later turn into adult beetles. They dig themselves out of the pupal chamber to begin the next stage of life. The adults usually feed on the pollen and nectar of the host Eucalypts. A detailed description of these insects is given at the ALA reference (1). A beetle that is similar in appearance is *Phoracantha recurva*, which is referred to as the lesser Eucalypt longhorn.

A longhorn beetle with no common name is *Distichocera fuliginosa*. It exhibits sexual dimorphism: the male has fern-like antennae while the female's antennae have a more simple structure. Their bodies are 2–3 cm long, the male being larger than the female (see image '**a**' of the black ink drawings). Little is known about the biology of the species except that it is a



wood borer, the larvae having been found within branches of the tea tree *Leptospermum scoparium.* The adults feed on a variety of flowering trees and shrubs including Native Blackthorn, *Bursaria spinosa*. The ALA records are spread from southeast Queensland, down the east side of NSW, through Victoria into southeast SA as well as Tasmania. The ALA lists six species of *Distichocera*.

Roe's Longhorn Beetle, *Tropis roei*, is light brown and black, and mimics the colouring of the Lycid beetles *Porrostoma* species. Lycid beetles taste unsavoury and the colour mimicry is a protective measure that other species also use against predators. More than a few insect species mimic the Lycid beetles' colours as a method of protection. Roe's Longhorn Beetles' bodies are 13 mm to 22 mm long. The shape of their antennae is also very interesting, with a furry tuft in the middle of its length. See image '**b**'. Most other species of the genus *Tropis* have similar antennae. ALA records of *Tropis roei* are spread in the south-eastern part of the Australian continent away from the drier plains.

The Tiger Longhorn Beetle, *Aridaeus thoracicus*, is easy to recognise because of its colouring: orange and black; the elytra are orange with black stripes. It grows to about 20 mm in body length. The males' antennae are longer than their bodies, and the females' antennae reach to about the ends of their abdomens. See image '**c**'. The adults feed on pollen and nectar from a variety of flowering plants and are often seen on Native Blackthorn. The larvae feed on dead wood from a range of trees such as Eucalypts. ALA records of *Aridaeus thoracicus* are distributed along the eastern side of Australia.

Canberra Nature Map has a field guide for Longhorn beetles, which is given at reference (2).

In the warmer months when trees and shrubs are flowering, it is an interesting exercise to see what is feeding on the flowers. It is quite likely that you will find a number of beetles feeding on the nectar and pollen, and among them you may see a longhorn beetle or two.

Main references:

(1) https://bie.ala.org.au/species/https://biodiversity.org.au/afd/taxa/ea2d172e-284b-400c-bc3c-b1677cac348e
(2) https://canberra.naturemapr.org/categories/guide/235
https://www.ento.csiro.au/biology/cerambycidae/cerambycidae.html
https://ausemade.com.au/flora-fauna/fauna/insects/coleoptera/cerambycidae/aridaeus-thoracicus/

Close-up – Au Revoir

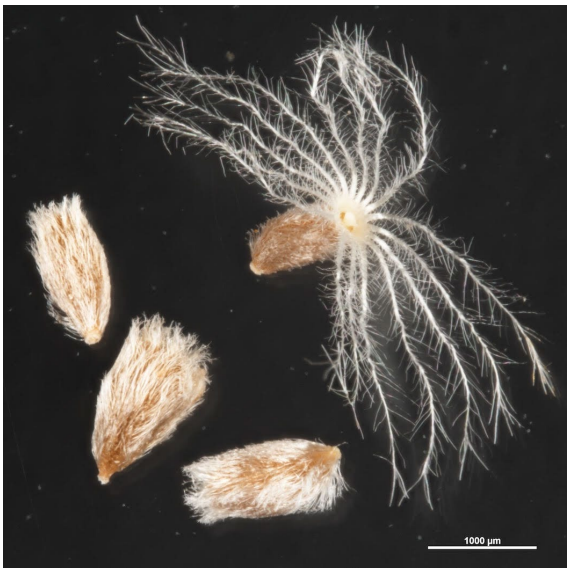
John Fitz Gerald

After producing articles for almost every newsletter for the past twelve years, I've decided to conclude the series. In that time I've managed to squeeze in 170 species, both native and exotic, many with microphotos of seeds.

I've gained a lot of pleasure poking around collecting, imaging and winkling out what I hope has been useful information about the plants, their abundance and distribution. For me, the most interesting contributions were printed in July and August 2018 when I looked into hygroscopic awns on some native grasses, and in November to December 2025 concerning the variable sex of male *Wurmbea dioica* ssp*. dioica*. I sincerely thank the National Seedbank for facilitating this series by allowing their stereo microscopes to be used for my imaging.

I'm not planning to stop imaging seeds and flowers with microscopes, nor to stop volunteering with FOG – just to finish writing regularly about images. I'll invite any readers who think they have a good subject which they'd like to see in a special article to make contact via john.fitzgerald@fog.org.au. You never know, I might just jump at one or more suggestions.

My final regular contribution is about a popular flower in some native grasslands: *Craspedia variabilis*, common name Billy Button. This species is an Australian endemic and occurs widely across all states in southern Australia but particularly in the south-east corner of the country, mostly on the Dividing Range and on the western plains of Victoria. ALA shows about 5,500 records. There are 30 or so species in genus *Craspedia* with *C. variabilis* being most often observed. Web searching reveals that eleven other species occur in New Zealand (with seven of them included in ALA) but not *C. variabilis*. Some work on the genus suggests that seed blown or carried from Australia 3,000,000 years ago subsequently led to the evolution of separate species in Aotearoa. One species, *C. uniflora*, pops up via ALA as shared between Australia and NZ, with four of its named varieties being exclusive to NZ.



Enough complexity and background! On to an image of our own *C. variabilis*. Here are some seeds from this year's seed production by Greening Australia in Canberra. Each seed in the inflorescences has a branched pappus which readily detaches when the seed is shed or harvested. My image shows one seed with a pappus plus three small, silky, bullet-shaped seeds without. The scale bar represents 1 mm.

Information was gathered from: Atlas of Living Australia ala.org.au and https://www.forestandbird.org.nz/resources/back-brink

In the media, relating to grassy ecosystems, did you see …?

- Rare video of night parrot chick hiding in spinifex tunnel in WA desert. *ABC Science* https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2026-09-24/young-night-parrot-found-in-wa-desert-by-indigenous-rangers/107178414?utm_source=braze&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=20260923_newsam_newsletter&utm_id=6ab444db8a12c6c194d1cbfc862e926a Sent by Margaret Ning
- Conservation parks don't have to be vast – as one tiny grasshopper reminds us. *The Conversation* https://theconversation.com/conservation-parks-dont-have-to-be-vast-as-one-tiny-grasshopper-reminds-us-293110
- Why mosses are vital for the health of our soil and earth. *UNSW* (2023) https://www.unsw.edu.au/newsroom/news/2023/05/why-mosses-are-vital-for-the-health-of-our-soil-and-earth#:~:text=%E2%80%9CWhat%20we%20show%20in%20our,carbon%20and%20more%20nitrogen.%20So Sent by Rosemary Blemings
- Changing Australia: Michael Mulvaney and protecting Red Hill and the Gang-Gang Cockatoo. *ABC Radio* https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/radionational-breakfast/changing-oz-michael-mulvaney-protecting-red-hill-and-gang-gang-/107011388 Sent by Margaret Ning

Please help measure Natural Temperate Grassland restoration in north Belconnen!

Dr Ken Hodgkinson

I need to record the plant species in up to 13 research sites established in Natural Temperate Grassland in the Ginninderra Catchment.
It's an opportunity for practising skills in identifying local herbaceous plants.
Can you help?

We do this survey during early November, as we have done every second year since 2016, to see if these four management methods benefit native species vs weeds:

- mown six times a year (every second month: the 'Canberra mow')
- burnt every two to three years in autumn
- burnt every four to six years in autumn
- left unmanaged ('control').

For background about the research, see https://ginninderralandcare.org.au/native-grassland-restoration-landcare-group/ which includes a video. Also, at the 2025 Friends of Grasslands mid-winter talks I summarised findings so far. Please email me if you'd like the PowerPoint file of that presentation (see also the report in *FOG Newsletter* 2025-11 p. 20).

At the beginning of this year we published the first journal paper, using data that volunteers had collected from 7 of the 13 sites, in a glasshouse experiment looking at plant–soil interactions (https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11104-025-08057-3/). Two practical findings are: that exotic plants invading native grasslands do not adversely change the soil environment for growth of emerging native plants (but competition for other resources from exotic plants will); and that a native grassland, even when invaded by exotic plants, retains soil biota that reduce the establishment of African Lovegrass seedlings.

If you can help in the field this year, on any morning (preferred) apart from Wednesdays, please email or phone me to say when you're available. I will bring all the gear needed, including a first-aid kit, a sign-in book (for insurance purposes), water, and hot water for tea and coffee. There could be snakes to watch out for.

This could be the final year of treatments and measurements – I have data since 2014. As we go about measuring the plots this time, I would like your opinions on that proposal. However, I do consider that further research is needed to raise the success of 'nature repair' efforts of landcarers.

I look forward to hearing from you.
If you know somebody wanting to learn plant ID skills, please bring them along with you.

email: ken.hodgkinson1@outlook.com
mobile: +61 429 606 788

Blue Gum Point restoration, Yarralumla

Jamie Pittock

The FOG work party at Blue Gum Point planted 580 *Dianella*, *Lomandra* and *Microlaena* to revegetate the last area of lake edge cleared of woody weeds. This record number of tubestock was planted by 15 volunteers over 63 volunteer hours. A follow-up work party on the 17th of October planted the last 180 tubestock.

The revegetation is to protect adjacent good quality grasslands and a population of endangered Button Wrinklewort from weed invasion. The plants were funded from the last of FOG's FY26 ACT Environment Grant.

Our plantings over the last 5 years are growing very strongly and dominating the shoreline.







Photos: Andrew Zelnik.

A note from Margaret Ning, introducing the article below



Canberra Grassland Earless Dragons have moved in at the Canberra Reptile Zoo in Gold Creek, along with Northern Corroboree Frogs. Yes, you can see both these threatened fauna of grassy ecosystems – along with several other threatened reptile species – at 'Snakes Alive' run by the ACT Herpetological Association (ACTHA) at the Australian National Botanic Gardens for *1 week each January* (thanks to the ACT Government generously lending individuals of the two species to the exhibition). *But now* we can see them *every day of the year* thanks to the Reptile Zoo. (Note: There are even EV Superchargers, newly opened, nearby at Gold Creek.)

Abi's article (first published in *ACTHA Inc. News*: *Newsletter of the ACT Herpetological Association*, Oct-Nov 2026), explains the value of the Reptile Zoo's new permanent display in adding to everyone's knowledge of these creatures. The Reptile Zoo is open 7 days a week 10 am–5 pm, in Gold Creek village opposite the clock tower. Tickets at the door or online info@canberrareptilezoo.org.au. [Margaret is a member of ACTHA as well as FOG.]

The Wild Side of Canberra – A New Threatened Species Display at Canberra Reptile Zoo

Abi Sellars[1]

On 25 September 2026, Canberra Reptile Zoo officially opened *The Wild Side of Canberra*, a new display dedicated to raising awareness of Australia's threatened wildlife and the importance of conservation. The display was officially opened by ACT Chief Minister Andrew Barr MLA, marking an exciting milestone for the zoo and its ongoing commitment to conservation education.

The new display showcases remarkable native species including: the critically endangered Canberra Grassland Earless Dragon, Northern Corroboree Frog, Rosenberg's Monitor and Green and Golden Bell Frog. Each species has its own conservation story, highlighting the threats facing Australia's native wildlife and the importance of ongoing research, habitat protection and conservation programs.

Of particular interest to ACTHA members are the **Canberra Grassland Earless Dragon** and **Northern Corroboree Frog**, two species closely associated with the ACT region. Both have experienced significant population declines, with threats including habitat loss, environmental changes and disease. The display provides an opportunity for visitors to learn more about these species and the conservation efforts underway to protect them.

The display also has an important connection to the ACT Government's conservation programs, with former breeding animals from government conservation initiatives contributing to the new exhibits. This provides a valuable opportunity for animals previously involved in conservation programs to continue playing a role in species protection through public education and awareness.



Beyond showcasing threatened wildlife, *The Wild Side of Canberra* aims to encourage visitors to consider the role they can play in conservation. Through educational signage and engaging interpretation, visitors can explore the challenges facing native species and gain a greater appreciation for the unique biodiversity found in our own backyard.

The new display reflects Canberra Reptile Zoo's ongoing commitment to wildlife education, providing opportunities for families, school groups and the wider community to connect with conservation issues in an accessible and engaging way.

For ACTHA members, *The Wild Side of Canberra* is a fantastic opportunity to see some of Australia's threatened reptiles and amphibians up close, learn more about their conservation stories and recognise the important work being undertaken to secure their future.

Opening the exhibit at the Reptile Zoo. *Above*: A dragon at the zoo. *Images supplied by the author.*

[1]Abi Sellars is a committee member of ACT Herpetological Association (ACTHA)

Reports on four recent activities

Tarengo TSR and Red Hill Reserve, Boorowa – Monday 12 Oct 2026

Margaret Ning and Rainer Rehwinkel

On a lovely sunny day, our Boorowa (NSW) destinations included a grassland travelling stock reserve (TSR) with a population of an endangered orchid in full flower, and Red Hill Reserve, a Crown reserve in the heart of the town.



Tarengo Leek Orchid.
Photo: A. Zelnik.

Led by Rainer Rehwinkel, and Mel Henry from Local Land Services (LLS), fifteen keen travellers gathered at Tarengo TSR, knowing that the orchid they were hoping to see was pretty-much a guaranteed sighting: Tarengo Leek Orchid (*Paraprasophyllum petilum*) was having a good year. Tarengo TSR is a premier example of the critically endangered Natural Temperate Grassland.

The cool burn undertaken by a local Indigenous group earlier in the year covered a large proportion of the reserve, including the exclosures, reducing the previous biomass significantly. Mel told us the eastern side of Cunningar Rd may be burnt next year.

The TSR offered something for everyone, including a large-bottomed yellow and black wasp that Dr Roger Farrow confirmed was the male of a native species we had come across almost 20 years earlier.

To minimise our collective impacts on the TSR, especially to the leek orchid, onion orchids (*Microtis* sp.), Creamy Candles (*Stackhousia monogyna*), Small Vanilla-lily (*Arthropodium minus*), sun orchids (*Thelymitra* sp.), and all the other grassland forbs, we all tried to walk on the hitherto still-not-flowering grass tussocks. This has long been our fall-back strategy when visiting the most precious grassland areas.

Sadly, St John's Wort *Hypericum perforatum* (SJW) advances inexorably over the site. Over the 25 years since we first visited the TSR we have seen it arrive and spread all over both sides of the reserve, to the point that it is difficult to envisage it could ever be defeated. We saw some SJW beetles but not enough to be of any effect. Unfortunately, the amount of Onion grass (*Romulea rosea*) had also multiplied to the point that it was definitely beyond where it could be defeated in many areas of the reserve. Interestingly it also bore the tell-tale rust the species has exhibited this year in some Canberra sites, and in one area significant numbers of its bulbs had been dug up and eaten by cockatoos.

We were 'visited' at the site by a woman and her son who had followed us from Canberra in the hope of talking to someone in FOG about threatened grassland species, which the son was studying in school in Adelaide. He was privileged to have an interview with Rainer, which was recorded, and then they continued their trip home to Adelaide. Meanwhile, we all headed for the Boorowa bakery to purchase lunch to eat in a nearby park.



The group at Red Hill Reserve.
Photo: A. Zelnik.

Next, we went to Red Hill Reserve, with its critically endangered Box-Gum Grassy Woodland, which Pat T and Albert W have been looking after for 60 years! The reserve is in the middle of town and also had a cool burn in May this year, although some areas were burnt a little too hot. The site has a number of interpretative signs. The understorey has a reasonable number of natives and, over time – according to Rainer – slashing has greatly improved it.



Bulbine-lilies at Red Hill Reserve.
Photo: A. Zelnik.

Roger Farrow sighted around 10 Key's Matchstick Grasshoppers. Flowering highlights included at least one sun orchid (*Thelymitra* sp.), a large patch of Common Bulbines (*Bulbine bulbosa*), many scattered Small Vanilla-lily (*Arthropodium minus*), and a patch of Native Flax (*Linum marginale*). Early Nancies (and the male Early Normans) (*Wurmbea dioica*) had already flowered, with the females bearing fruits. Blue Devil (*Eryngium ovinum*) were growing vigorously and in bud, and a handful of Opium Poppy (*Papaver somniferum*) blew in the breeze.

It was a good day. Thank you to Mel and Rainer for leading us.

Several Bungendore TSRs – Sunday 18 October 2026

Margaret Ning, Libby Keen, Ann Milligan

On a day of perfect weather, a handful of FOG members joined rather more members of Canberra Birds (around 20 people all up) to visit travelling stock reserves (TSRs) near Bungendore NSW, led by Rainer Rehwinkel and Margaret Ning. After an earlyish start we entered Duck Flat TSR, at the intersection of Taylors Creek Rd and Tarago Rd, at about 9.30 am (having beaten the locked gate thanks to Canberra Birds' Kim Farley who brought a folding ladder 'to act as a stile'). Duck Flat has a fine example of one of the endanged Snow Gum Grassy Woodland communities. The site seemed not to have been grazed recently, but near the small creek the damp soil is well hoof-pugged. In the open paddock between the gate and the creek there were few obvious native grassland forbs. However, in the grassy woodland on slightly higher ground we found beautiful wildflowers – mainly yellow or purple – in patches metres wide, or in small scattered groups. Examples: Common buttercups (*Ranunculus lappaceus*), an unidentified golden moth orchid (*Diuris* sp.) (photo, left), Scaly Buttons (*Leptorhynchos squamatus*) and Variable Billy-buttons (*Craspedia variabilis*), Austral Bugle (*Ajuga australis*), Narrow-leaved Violet (*Viola betonicifolia*) and Common Woodrush (*Luzula densiflora*). Crossing the small creek, the upper headwaters of Mulwarrie Ponds, somehow without disturbing the Little Ravens at their nest within a grove of the vulnerable Black Gum (*Eucalyptus aggregata*), we found Peach Heath (*Lissanthe strigosa*), onion orchids (*Microtis* sp.), yet to flower, and Cranberry Heath (*Styphelia humifusa*) in flower, and many more buttercups and buttons. A Blotched Bluetongue, the species that replaces the Eastern Bluetongue at altitude, posed for as many photographers as were interested.



Sweeneys TSR, in which we wandered from mid-morning till lunchtime, seemed in perfect condition, This site, on Tarago Rd north of Bungendore, has a variety of communities, including Snow Gum Grassy Woodland, the critically endangered Box-Gum Grassy Woodland, Dry Forest dominated by Brittle Gum (*E. mannifera*), Candlebark (*E.rubida*), a riparian community of Manna Gum (*E. viminalis*) and extensive areas of Natural Temperate Grassland. The ground here was drier and not pugged. We saw no signs of recent grazing, though the groundcover was very short. Numerous wonderful wildflowers included Scaly Buttons and Billy Buttons, golden moth orchids (both pale yellow and darker yellow), Showy Parrot Pea (*Dillwynia sericea*), Narrow Plantain (*Plantago gaudichaudii*), Smooth Solenogyne (*Solenogyne dominii*), Creeping Bossiaea (*Bossiaea prostrata*) (left), lichen, and Nodding Blue Lily (*Stypandra glauca*) (right) as well as other species we had already seen at Duck Flat. Yet to flower were extensive stands of Lemon Beautyheads (*Calocephalus citreus*). Some participants were treated to the sight of an Echidna drinking at a dam and then swimming; others saw a Tiger Snake. Birds noisy in the woodland here included a White-throated Treecreeper and a Striated Pardalote, but unfortunately Noisy Miners dominated. Near the ground under some trees a few FOG members spotted the gleaming wings of a Satin-Green Forester Moth (*Pollanisus viridipulverulenta*) (left), which quickly disappeared into the leaf-litter. (Canberra NatureMapr records a sighting of this moth, whose larvae depend on *Hibbertia* species, late last year at another TSR near Bungendore.)







After a few kilometres of rambling at the two sites, and then lunch in Bungendore, the party set off for a Crown reserve at Six Mile on Hoskintown Rd south of Bungendore. This site has a mixture of Box Gum and Snow Gum grassy woodlands, and Dry Forest with Scribbly Gum (*E. rossii*). The highly diverse groundlayer under the shady trees was immediately appreciated, as the day was warming up. Even after only a brief wander, the site had earned the title 'Yellow Daisy Heaven'. Ten species, viz. Billy Buttons, Sticky Everlasting (*Xerochrysum viscosum*), Common Everlasting (*Chrysocephalum apiculatum*), Clustered Everlasting (*Chrysocephalum semipapposum*) (though not flowering),

Button Everlasting (*Coronidium scorpioides*), Showy Copper-wire daisy (*Podolepis jaceoides*), Scaly Buttons, Austral Bear's-ears (*Cymbonotus lawsonianus*), Murnong (*Microseris walteri*), and Hoary Sunray (*Leucochrysum albicans* var. *tricolor*) (albeit with white bracts and a yellow disc) revealed themselves to us as we traversed the site.

Given this was a combined trip with Canberra Birds, it was interesting to see that this third and final site elicited more bird attention than the other two. This site, with its variety of habitats and dearth of Noisy Miners, had a greater richness of small bush birds, and a highlight here were the active and noisy Sacred Kingfishers that gave participants a nice show with a courtship display. Rainer recorded 23, 20 and 25 bird species at the three sites respectively.

Our combined group of FOG and COG members happily shared their knowledge and their delight in the rich grassy-woodland ecosystem. We could see and hear how the terrain sustains a wide range of flora and associated fauna: birds, insects, reptiles, mammals – and masses of frogs! The day helped to show how valuable the travelling stock reserves have become as sites of biodiversity.

Rainer, thank you so much for all your help with FOG's program this season. Whether visiting new sites or re-visiting old ones, your company is fun, insightful, reassuring and totally informative.

Photos: Golden moth orchid, Forester moth, and bird-watching at Sweeney's east paddock, all by A. Zelnik. *Bossiaea prostrata* and *Stypandra glauca* by A. Milligan.

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The Reserve at the end of Kambah Pool Road, ACT – Wednesday 21 October 2026

Margaret Ning

Thirteen FOG members enjoyed another sunny spring day for our visit to a grassy site within the Bullen Range Nature Reserve near Kambah Pool in the Murrumbidgee River. We were accompanied by ACT Fire Ecologist, Bethany Dunne.

Our walk was through a grassland–woodland mosaic, with a Community r8 grassland (as classified and described by Rainer Rehwinkel). These grasslands are characteristic of steep rocky sites, often overlooking rivers. Similar grasslands that FOG is familiar with include Yass Gorge (at Yass, NSW) and Monash Grassland ACT.



As we set out along the well-formed track, there were opportunities to discuss and query some management decisions that have been made on the site. Some strange treatment of African Lovegrass (*Eragrostis curvula*) warranted a bit of head scratching, and spraying of Corkscrew Grass (*Austrostipa scabra*) had us wondering if Serrated Tussock (*Nassella trichotoma*) had been the intended target. Reassuringly, some Great Mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*) and other undesirable exotics had also been sprayed.

During the morning we saw the largest expanses of Native Sorghum (*Sorghum leiocladum*) that I have ever seen. In another area, huge patches of Murnong (*Microseris walteri*) (*photo left*) displayed every growth stage – from buds through to flowering and dispersing fluffies. An assumed Tall Sedge (*Carex appressa*) had us querying its location – rather high in the landscape. We then wondered whether it was, instead, Hillside Sedge (*Carex incomitata*) ... and that was what it turned out to be, so we were pleased with ourselves that we had put that puzzle together.



Other sightings that generated discussion:

- an urn heath, (*Melichrus*) with a rather more upright habit than normal. We wondered if it was the new local *Melichrus* species we have heard about,
- when being told the area contains a scattered patch of Swamp Gum (*Eucalyptus camphora*),
- when Bethany pointed out a Key's Matchstick Grasshopper (*Keyacris scurra*) (*photo right*) to those of us lucky enough to be near her, and

- when we saw probable deer damage to some eucalypts.

The most excitement of the morning came from flowering Late Mauve Doubletail (*Diuris dendrobioides*) (*photo right*). Other highlights included some Notched Swainson-pea (*Swainsona monticola*), a small patch of Tiger Orchid (*Diuris sulphurea*), an onion orchid (*Microtis* sp.), and Common Fringe-lily (*Thysanotus tuberosus*).



Thank you, Bethany, for sharing this site with us,
and Rainer for yet another grassy ecosystem tour.

Photos by Andrew Zelnik.

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Mt Taylor's grassy woodland – Saturday 24 October 2026

Margaret Ning



On another beautifully sunny October afternoon, invited by Michael Bedingfield, our small group assembled in a shady carpark at the base of Mt Taylor, Kambah ACT, and admired the nearby display of colourful wildflowers. The 'yellows' included numerous Bulbine-lilies (*Bulbine bulbosa*), a handful of Sticky Everlasting (*Xerochrysum viscosum*), a lone wood-sorrel (*Oxalis* sp.), and a mature Austral Bear's-ears (*Cymbonotus lawsonianus*), surrounded by seedlings. Other colours were provided by a bluebell (*Wahlenbergia capillaris*) and a pink geranium (*Geranium* sp.). This was a great introduction for the three new FOG members who formed part of the group.





Left: *Diuris sulpurea* (LW). Above: the yellowish-green area (next to sparser grassland (AM). Right: a *Drosera* sp. (LW).

Advancing into the reserve, there was more yellow in a large patch of fresh Tiger Orchid (*Diuris sulphurea*) and yet more Bulbine-lilies, which as you probably know, are having a banger of a season. We could see a large clearing ahead of us upslope with yellowish-green colouring, and headed for it. It turned out to be an interesting combination of a sundew (*Drosera* sp.), and Austral Sunray (*Triptilodiscus pygmaeus*), with numerous other treasures amongst them. There were myriad onion orchids (*Microtis* sp.), some of which had popped out their tiny flowers, and some random not-yet-flowering Nodding Chocolate-lily (*Dichopogon fimbriatus*). Near a drainage line there were happy looking Variable Billy-buttons (*Craspedia variabilis*) and Violet Kunzea (*Kunzea parviflora*), leading to another open grassy area. Very few grass species were flowering, other than annual exotics.



Over the decades the canopy at Mt Taylor has closed up considerably, and one wonders how the open grassy patches will fare over the next couple of decades. They contain many species that are



Left: A Short Wallaby Grass (*Rytidosperma* sp.) flower (LW). Right: Violet Kunzea (*Kunzea parviflora*) (AM).



generally found in grasslands: for example, Smooth Solenogyne (*Solenogyne dominii*), Scrambled Eggs (*Goodenia pinnatifida*), Sweet Hound's tongue (*Hackelia suaveolens*), Austral Sunray, Small Matrush (*Lomandra bracteata*) and Swan Greenhood (*Pterostylis cycnocephala*).



Highlights were the most extensive display of the Austral Sunray I have ever seen, the proud patch of Tiger Orchids, a Narrawa-burr *Solanum cinereum* which we seldom see, and three bluebell species – *Wahlenbergia multicaulis*, *W. capillaris* and *W. stricta* … and a basking juvenile Jacky Dragon!



Thank you to Michael and Andrew for their always invaluable contributions, and it was a delight to be showing the three new members around for the first time.



Top left: the group learning from Michael and Margaret (AM).
Middle left: Jacky Dragon (LW);
Right: Swan Greenhood orchid (MB);
Bottom: Austral Sunray (*Triptilodiscus pygmaeus*) in the centre, compared to much larger Hop Clover flowers (*Trifolium campestre*) beside key tip and beyond the sunray). (AM).
Photos by Linda Wilson (LW), Michael Bedingfield (MB) and A. Milligan (AM).

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Monday 19 October – Plant Recognition field workshop

Ann Milligan

The Blue Devil Grassland in Latham, part of Umbagong District Park, is in excellent condition this spring. Following a burn last year, forbs, orchids and ferns are doing well in the plentiful small gaps between grass tussocks – mainly Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda triandra*) and wallaby-grasses (*Rytidosperma* spp.).



Photo: A. Zelnik.

The site was ideal for an outdoor workshop for members of the Plant Recognition Group (part of Friends of the Australian National Botanic Gardens). The group generally meets indoors at the Gardens, using microscopes. On Monday 19 October, we were outdoors, enjoying glorious spring sunshine in three groups (photo) learning from experts Rainer Rehwinkel, Margaret Ning, John Fitz Gerald and Andrew Zelnik as we slowly explored the grassland. For instance, we were shown how to recognise native and exotic grassland plants by examining various characteristics, including leaf-widths, textures and hairiness, and by close examination of auricles and ligules, flag-leaf positions, stem cross-sections, spikelet and floret structures, and annual versus perennial life-forms. Forbs that were highlighted included

Blue Devil (*Eryngium ovinum*) (of course), Hoary Sunray (*Leucochrysum albicans* var. *tricolor*), Common Everlasting (*Chrysocephalum apiculatum*), Bulbine-lily (*Bulbine bulbosa*), an onion orchid (*Microtis* sp.), and Rock Fern (*Cheilanthes sieberi*). Several weed species were touched on, including Cat's-ear (*Hypochaeris radicata*), a fleabane (*Conyza* sp.), and clovers (*Trifolium* spp.), and others.

The group thanks Rainer and Margaret, John and Andrew for an enlightening afternoon.

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LOOK! Conservation property (40 ha) for sale *near* Numeralla NSW for $720,000





This FOG member's property would be wonderful for people who want to conserve and care for nature.

- A Biodiversity Conservation Trust agreement protects ~90% of the property in perpetuity.
- The property has several Native Plant Community Types including Monaro Tableland Cool Temperate Grassy Woodland (critically endangered). Resident Threatened flora and fauna include Silky Swainson-pea (*Swainsona sericea*), Koala, Gang-gang Cockatoo, Scarlet Robin and other small woodland birds.
- The owners have been restoring the land since 2019 using both bush regeneration and some assisted actions including revegetation.
- The two-bedroom house has a northerly aspect and surrounding views. There is an open plan kitchen, dining and living area with wood burning heater and air conditioning. Also new roofing and guttering, upgraded rainwater tanks with a filtration system, insulation and an upgraded septic system, and an 18-panel 6.3kW solar system and heat pump.
- The 3-bay machinery shed has power. The old stables have connected power and water (opportunity for a possible second dwelling (STCA)).
- 90 mins (approx.) to Canberra, the snow fields or the far south coast, and 15 mins (approx.) to Cooma.
- Rates reduced through BCT agreement (approx.): $310.21 pa.
- Grant funding available through BCT for works associated with the property plan.

Contact One Agency, Cooma 02 6452 6121 for further details or click on the link
https://www.oneagencyjodialexander.com.au/property?property_id=1866707/1560-numeralla-road-numeralla

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Job advertisement

Greening Australia is looking for a **Casual Operational Delivery Support Officer** to help across nursery, seedbank and operations. See the advert in NRMjobs,
https://nrmjobs.com.au/jobs/2026/20030274/casual-operational-delivery-support-officers?back=1
Closing date: 28 November 2026

Advocacy

See also https://fog.org.au/advocacy.htm

In reverse chronological order:

FOG calls for intervention at Yarramundi Reach grasslands, 21/10

FOG asked the ACT Conservator of Flora and Fauna to intervene to conserve the Yarramundi Reach grasslands at Acton. FOG has worked in partnership with the National Capital Authority to conserve a 23-hectare natural temperate grassland remnant there since 2009. The site is now also the focus of a major ACT NRM grasslands restoration project led by Dr Martin Henery. FOG is concerned that ACT Government lessees are planting weed species in the adjoining grounds and not controlling significant weeds. FOG do not publish emails like these; we regard them as private correspondence. FOG members interested in more detail on this matter can contact me at matt.whitting@fog.org.au.

Construction of a registered club premises (DA.2023.0635, NSW), 7/10

FOG made a submission on this development application on 3 August (submission); this was reported in the last newsletter. As a submitter, FOG was notified that the construction of a licensed Club in Jerrabomberra, on land just southeast of where Canberra Grassland Earless Dragons have recently been sighted, can proceed after a decision to refuse the development was successfully appealed *on unrelated matters* in the NSW Land and Environment Court (judgement; details of the proposal).

This long-running case brings into question the rigour of NSW 'biodiversity certification' (assessment) processes, which are based on the NSW Biodiversity Assessment Method. On 2 August 2023, an assessment of the land to be cleared found it was "potential habitat" for Dragons. How was certification granted when, over two months earlier, the species was listed as threatened at the level 'critically endangered' under the EPBC Act?

Dunns Creek Road (NSW), 6/10 (here)

See the article on this case in this newsletter.

NSW NPWS Establishment Plan, 6/10 (here)

FOG submitted that the NSW *draft National Parks Establishment Plan 2026* (draft Plan) should be amended to reveal the poor protection of grassy ecosystems in the NSW South Eastern Highlands. This bioregion is 10–15 per cent protected in NSW; however, we argued this hides much lower protection levels in its grassy subregions, such as Murrumbateman (1.76 per cent), Orange (2.52) and Bathurst (3.06). Natural temperate grassland is critically endangered nationally but isn't listed as threatened under NSW law, so it's left out of the Plan's priorities. We noted FOG's 2024 nomination to list this ecological community under NSW law is still awaiting a decision. FOG asked NPWS to report reservation statistics for grassy ecosystems specifically, and to make grassland remnants a priority for acquisition and protection.

FOG wrote to NSW Environment Minister Penny Sharpe, 1/10

FOG wrote to the Minister after we met her and Monaro MP Steve Whan on 29 Sept. Our letter asks that NSW: list Natural Temperate Grassland of the NSW South Eastern Highlands as a threatened ecological community, acting on FOG's July 2024 nomination; align NSW grassland assessment with the Commonwealth's diagnostic test; fund grassy ecosystem management, including targeted African Lovegrass control; and re-establish a grasslands conservation management network. We warned that, under the Native Vegetation Regulatory Map self-assessment, land classed as low conservation value in NSW may still be protected under national law. FOG do not publish letters like these; we regard them as private correspondence. FOG members interested in more detail about this matter can contact me at matt.whitting@fog.org.au.

NSW South East Conservation Investment Strategy Workshop, 22/9

Rainer Rehwinkel and Matt Whitting represented FOG at a workshop on NSW's draft South East Conservation Investment Strategy, which sets conservation priorities for the primary purpose of making wise offset decisions before transmission and renewable energy projects proceed. Following FOG's written feedback, maps of natural temperate grassland are to be included in the strategy alongside NSW-listed threatened ecological communities, grassland data has been added to its spatial prioritisation model, and there is to be an acknowledgement African lovegrass, Chilean needle grass and Serrated tussock need targeted, coordinated management. This Strategy is expected to be published by 31 October 2026.

Gungahlin Homestead Estate redevelopment, 21/9 (here)

FOG argued the Gungahlin Homestead Estate redevelopment should be determined to be a controlled action. While small, the project will have significant impacts on Box-Gum Grassy Woodland values (critically endangered, 0.03 ha will be cleared) given evidence showing the site's importance to Superb Parrots; we cited ACT Government tracking data demonstrating the site links nests in Goorooyarroo to the northeast with foraging areas to the southwest. In addition, 0.58 ha of Golden Sun Moth habitat and 1.8 ha of Striped Legless Lizard habitat will be cleared, putting important populations of both species at risk. The proposal has since been determined to be 'not a controlled action", so it needs no further assessment under national environment law before it can proceed.

Canberra's Biggest Nutbush: Line Up for Our City Limits, 19/9

FOG members were spotted 'doing the nutbush' line dance, calling on the ACT Government to follow through on their promise to set Canberra's city limits. Rainer, thank you for speaking up for the protection of grassy ecosystems on Canberra's Western Edge.

Site visit to the edge of North Lawson Grasslands, 15/9

For more than two years, FOG has worked with the Conservation Council ACT Region to press Defence Housing Australia (DHA) and the federal regulator to better protect and manage the critically endangered grasslands and grassy woodlands at Lawson North. Our letters have raised concerns about weed spread, biomass build-up and site disturbance. On 15 September, FOG joined the Council on a site visit with DHA. Afterwards we supplied detailed management advice on controlling Serrated Tussock, African Lovegrass and St John's Wort, protecting Striped Legless Lizard habitat, and preventing nutrient run-off. We also asked for regular meetings with DHA and for FOG to have access to the site for monitoring. While there were some positive signs communicated by the DHA official we spoke with on the day, we are yet to gain access or see evidence of improved management.

Hanworth Battery Project near Taralga (EPBC 2026/10615), 10/9 (here)

FOG and the Conservation Council ACT Region jointly commented on this proposal. We noted the proponent concedes it might significantly affect the Diamond Firetail. We argued the impacts on threatened Box-Gum Grassy Woodland also needed close scrutiny. The proponent's mapping shows more than half of the Box-Gum vegetation type in the project area falls within the disturbance footprint (circa 27 ha); we noted the referral was inconsistent about whether the listed community would be directly impacted; and we questioned whether enough like-for-like NSW offset credits exist. The proposal has since been determined to be not a controlled action, so it needs no further assessment under national environment law before it can proceed.

Contact us

General inquiries, health and safety	info@fog.org.au
Media inquiries	0407265131 (Jamie Pittock)
Membership enquiries,	membership@fog.org.au
Events & work parties	Calendar
Book order forms	Grassland & Woodland Flora.
Advocacy contact	advocacy@fog.org.au
Website matters	webmanager@fog.org.au
Projects / work party contacts	Hall Cemetery, Ginninderry, Yarramundi Grassland: john.fitzgerald@fog.org.au. Scrivener's Hut, Gurubang Dhawura (Stirling Park), Blue Gum Point: jamie.pittock@fog.org.au. Budjan Galindji (Franklin) Grasslands, TSRs, Old Cooma Common: margaret.ning@fog.org.au. 'Scottsdale': linda.spinaze@fog.org.au
Newsletter contact	newsletter@fog.org.au
Contact addresses	secretary@fog.org.au
Payments & accounts	treasurer@fog.org.au
Annual reports	annual reports
FOG Committee	secretary@fog.org.au



Wildflower display very late in the afternoon at the end of a FOG weed control work party on the cusp of October–November 2026 at Top Hut TSR, Dry Plain NSW. This picture was taken looking north to the road from the southwestern area of the west (or south or fireshed side) paddock. The most conspicuous wildflowers here, Hoary Sunray (*Leucochrysum albicans* var. *tricolor*) and Billy Buttons (*Craspedia variabilis*), are having a great season as are many other native plant species elsewhere across this paddock and in the east (or north or non-fireshed side) paddock on the other side of the road. This is just a taste of the great diversity and abundance of native flora currently flowering and emerging and generally excellent floristic condition at this iconic Natural Temperate Grassland site. This reflects a payoff for the ongoing conservation management efforts (on-ground and behind the scenes) of FOG volunteers since 2020 in liaison with NSW Government South East Local Land Services and DCCEEW Environment and Heritage threatened species staff, and neighbouring landholders. Of course, the price of success is vigilance so there is always more site condition monitoring, and weed control and fencing maintenance to be done but hopefully this will lessen somewhat with time!?

Also note, at the top of the photo, in the distance, the brighter green patch and planted row of pine trees clearly delineate one of the neighbouring grazing properties that envelope the TSR on both sides of the road. Sadly, the abundant native wildflower displays within the TSR almost entirely stop at, or soon peter out beyond, the boundary fences with the neighbouring properties.

Photo & caption: Andrew Zelnik