



Friends of Aranda Bushland Inc

to conserve and rehabilitate the bush

Convenor's Annual Report AGM Monday 26 February 2001

2000 has been the year of the Aranda Snow Gums Heritage Site and the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) funded project. It has marked a return to a focus on weeding. We have made great strides with the Snow Gums project. Our vision of a self guided Frost Hollow to Forest Trail is well on the way to reality. Weed control has continued to keep Aranda Bushland relatively weed free. Lobbying has not been forgotten - the need to address threats other than weeds continues.

I would like to express my warm appreciation to all members of the committee. Without their support and commitment, our conservation activities would not be effective. The 2000 team has been Ian Falconer (Deputy Convenor), Dave Kelly (Secretary), Robert Langdon (Treasurer), Peter Ormay, Mary Falconer, Judy Kelly, Helen Horden and June Petru. It was great to have new members on the team.

We've also had some marvellous work parties this year. I'd like to thank all those who contributed.

Aranda Snow Gums Heritage Site Agreement

We signed the agreement for our NHT project on 12 January 2000 and received the initial funds of \$8,700 - mostly for fencing. On 9 February, Minister Brendan Smyth launched the *Management Plan for Canberra Nature Park* on our patch and presented us with an NHT roadside sign. He also announced that the Aranda Snow Gums would be added to Canberra Nature Park.

On 7 March, Friends of Aranda Bushland struck a verbal agreement with Neville Stuart of Glenloch rural lease and Odile Arman of Canberra Nature Park to fence a corridor through the rural lease to connect the Snow Gums paddock with Aranda Bushland. In return, Glenloch would be provided with quicker and easier access to the Bindubi Street horse paddocks by fencing off a small paddock between the Snow Gums and William Hovell Drive. Both the new paddock and the existing one along lower Caswell Drive are critical fire hazard areas and are to be grazed in short bursts for this purpose. Friends of Aranda Bushland will undertake some weeding on the rural lease.

Fencing the Snow Gums Site

In late May, ACT Parks and Conservation Service replaced the boundary fence of the whole unleased area (Block 1399) following the decision that it would become part of Canberra Nature Park. They installed fencing to create the new paddock the same time. We purchased two stiles and fencing supplies two days before GST. We had a site meeting on 24 July and the NHT funded fencing for the corridor was erected early October. The Caswell Drive stile, the squeeze through and gate went in on the second week in January 2001. The pipe/trough to provide Glenloch with water from the large dam on Block 1399 remains outstanding.

The public liability insurance issue was raised at the 7 March meeting and taken up by myself and Ann Connolly, Parkcare Coordinator. It took a while to convince the government that the rural lessee was doing us a favour in allowing access and should not be expected to bear the risk. By November a letter of agreement had been drafted to protect the rural lessee from public liability claims relating to the fenced corridor. It is not yet signed.

Rabbit Control

The NHT grant said rabbit control was a state function. We had a site meeting on 29 May where Parks and Conservation agreed to do the work and use phostoxin which does not damage the old dead trees. They undertook rabbit control in October and are happy to do more if we tag live burrows.

Frost Hollow to Forest Trail

We were successful in obtaining \$3,700 in continuing NHT funds for the Snow Gums project and with the \$3,700 or so saved on the fencing should be able to get nine small interpretive signs. Funds could be a bit light on for graphic design. Hopefully, Parks and Conservation will contribute routed signs for the Caswell Drive entry (also less subject to vandalism) and the private property entry/exit. We are currently working on the wording with Sharon Lane and have someone to provide botanical drawings for identifying all ten gum tree species. Costs for the drawings will come from *Our Patch* returns.

A guided tour of our *Frost Hollow to Forest Trail* was offered on 1 April. This was our first time as part of the Heritage Festival and we attracted 20 non members. It was offered again on 15 October as part of the Rani Weed Raid. We also ran a successful guided *Wildflower Walk* on 14 October.

Weeding

There were 14 weeding parties for the Snow Gums, 2 for Aranda Bushland (another rained out), 2 on the rural lease and our contribution to the Rani Weed Raid Weedbuster's event. Work parties attracted up to 16 people with the best attendance after publicity. We sent 8 newsletters, a flyer for Neighbourhood Watch and got into the *Canberra Times*' Fridge Door and the *Chronicle*'s Contact.

By 1 May, we exceeded our NHT Snow Gums commitment of work in kind. All St John's wort and thistles in the key area had been pulled with seed heads removed off site. Key phalaris areas had been brushcut and most woody weeds removed from Block 1399. However, the spring rains saw St John's wort rear its head with vigour and a massive effort in pulling removed 90% of seed heads from three quarters of Block 1399. Our annual total (Feb/Jan) was 351 hours (incl 54 rural lease) or \$5,265 at \$15 per hour and \$11,550 including Snow Gums promotion, meetings and administration.

Some 147 hours were contributed to weeding in Aranda Bushland with a total of 804 hours for all activities. St John's wort has been kept at bay by pulling since 1993 and 98% of St John's wort and thistles were removed from all infestations we found. There has been much valuable work contributed by individuals and couples doing an hour or two well targeted work on small plants and in wet soil.

Erosion control on walking tracks

On 31 May and 1 June, we again used Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers work for track maintenance and step building on the Aranda Bushland loop of the *Frost Hollow to Forest Trail*. The heavy rains last spring have eroded those tracks again and we will need to do more work in the winter.

Displays and Submissions

During 2000, we had promotional displays at ACT Alive (20 March), World Environment Fair (3 June) and Jamison Centre (29/30 September). There were two launches on our site, Minister Brendan Smyth on 9 February and Senator Margaret Reid on 16 October and we had two newspaper photos. This year, your committee made submissions on the Lower Molonglo River Corridor (its our catchment), Aranda Shops and the John Dedman parkway (threatens to fragment our bushlands).