



Friends of the Aranda Bushland Inc

to conserve and rehabilitate the bush

phone- 6251-1345, fax 6251 7621, email - mefalconer@home.netspeed.com.au
address for correspondence - PO Box 376, Jamison, ACT 2614

Annual Report 2006 – 07

It is my pleasure to present my third and final annual report as Convenor of Friends of Aranda Bushland. 2006-7 has been a successful year for the group in many ways. The drought has brought advantages as well as problems.

I am pleased to report that weeds in both Aranda Bushland and the Snow Gums site are well under control, the tracks are in good order and that the planting of Snow Gums has been reasonably successful. This is due to the commitment of so many members, who turn out regularly for work parties and are available for extra activities when needed.

Work parties. We have had 3 workparties in the Aranda Bushland, 2 in the Rural Lease and 10 in the Snow Gums, with an average of more than 13 members attending. In addition, we had an offer from a group of young men who wanted to work in the bush before their Buck's party, they also worked in the Rural Lease. The consequence is that the area of Rural Lease nearest to the Aranda Bushland is now largely free of hawthorns and briars. This helps keep the Aranda Bushland clear of seedlings. We will continue to work in the Rural Lease because we appreciate the area known as South Aranda Woodland for its conservation value. We would like to see it incorporated in Aranda Bushland and are anxious to keep it in as good condition as possible.

Our work parties are a happy social gathering of like minds and we are grateful to Bill Packard who makes morning tea, fit for a king, every Sunday.

Projects. The vitality of the group is maintained by having a variety of activities in progress, not just weeding. This year we were pleased to complete the education project, for which we received an Environment Grant in 2005. The finale was the launch of the sculpted seats by the Minister for the Territory Mr John Hargreaves MLA on May 25th. We had a good turn out of members, friends, representatives of government agencies and the sculptor, Paul Jamieson despite the cold weather. We are deeply indebted to Hanna Jaireth for her work as leader of the project, to Bill White for his creative web work and to her band of helpers who so generously helped to complete the project.

Having completed one project we turned our attention to another issue which has been concerning us over the years. How can we hasten the rehabilitation of the badly eroded areas in the Snow Gums site? We held an on-site meeting with Peter Mills, our chief ranger, and Angela Calliess of Greening Australia. We agreed to call in the help of GA's consultant Paul Sureda for guidance and that GA would apply for a Landkeepers grant to cover the costs. The first stage of this project was to cover areas of bare ground with weed matting, seeded with native grasses. It is unfortunate that it coincided with a period of hot dry weather but the New Year rain has seen it bed down firmly and hopefully there are still seed there to germinate when conditions improve. If we are successful we will extend our activities.

Another work in progress is the preparation needed to reprint Our Patch. There will be a few additions and corrections, but it will stay essentially the same.

Experimenting and monitoring We are always interested in finding better ways of controlling weeds and encouraging native plant growth. We have 3 different experiments

running at present.

(1) We are experimenting with methods to control the growth of Phalaris in both the Aranda Bushland and the Snow Gums.. In the Bushland you will have observed that we mowed the areas densely covered with Phalaris, and removed the biomass, hoping to discourage the Phalaris and encourage native grasses by reducing the fertility of the area.

In the Snow Gums we have mowed the Phalaris as it comes into flowering, thus reducing its stores of nutrients when it most needs them for summer recovery.

To monitor how effective we have been we are using Sarah Sharp's step-point method of monitoring.

(2) We also have six experimental plots, using different methods to control St. John's wort. These have been going for 2 years now, but the seasonal variations make it very difficult to interpret the results at present.

(3) We used 3 different methods for planting the latest batch of Snow Gums. One group we cleared the ground and spread a thatch of Themeda straw before planting the 5 Snow Gums plants. In the second square we weeded the ground and planted Themeda plants among the 5 Snow Gums and in the third square we cleared the ground and covered it with a woven black plastic weed mat . We covered the plastic with the plant material previously removed and then planted both Themeda plants and Snow Gums into the area. After 6 months growth, there is an obvious benefit from the woven black plastic covering.

Submissions We have made no new submissions this year, but we maintain a watching brief on the development of the Molonglo Valley project, the Busway and the GDE at Caswell Drive and Glenloch interchange, reporting issues which give us cause for concern.

Education and networking. Conferences and workshops are important to keep us up-to-date with current thinking and research on conservation matters and a valuable way to network with other conservationists. I am delighted to report that more than 10 of our members took part in this type of activity. They included the symposium on Lowland Grassland Conservation, the National Parks Association symposium on Namadgi National Park, workshops on grass identification, grassy ecosystem management and the national Landcare conference in Melbourne.

We also had delegates at the Ginninderra Catchment Group and the Conservation Council.

Promotion An important part of our self-promotion is the notices on the cycle track and entrances to the Bushland and at shopping centres, which advertise our work parties. We have displayed our photographic collection at the Celebrate Heritage Weekend and at Pam Macdonald's Open Garden. We are grateful to Pam for electing us to be recipients of the monies for charity from her event.

We also ran a guided walk on the Celebrate Heritage weekend.

Membership and Statistics. We have 66 members on our mailing list, of whom 44 have been involved in our activities this year, 32 have been to one or more workparty and 12 have been to 7 or more.

For the first 11 months of the year members have contributed 1600 hours towards the work of the group. A detailed breakdown of activities will be available at the AGM.

Grateful thanks I would like to take this opportunity to say I have enjoyed being Convenor of Friends of Aranda Bushland. This is due not only to the hard work and support of the 10 members of my committee, but to the members who come regularly to work parties and at other times when needed. They have my heart felt thanks. We also appreciate the quiet support of those members who are unable to do physical work but who support us in many other ways. It is good to feel that we are working to a common goal and at the same time, enjoying ourselves and each other's company.

It is also a pleasure to be working with Greening Australia, and especially Angela Calliess, one time much loved Parkcare Coordinator.

A special vote of thanks needs to go to the staff of Environment and Recreation (TAMS), especially Peter Mills and Grant Woodbridge at Mitchell and to Rebecca Blundell our Parkcare Co-ordinator.

Mary E. Falconer

Convenor

22nd January 2006