

## **Friends of Aranda Bushland Inc**

### **Convenor's Report: Hanna Jaireth**

The Friends of Aranda Bushland continues to be an effective ParkCare group. During 2007 we made substantial progress with our Snow Gums erosion control project and annual work program. We published a 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of *Our Patch: Field Guide to the Flora of the Australian Capital Region as photographed in the Aranda Bushland*, and established a digital database of our photographic collection. We completed a trial of control methods for St John's wort, and participated in a range of ACT Government initiatives, including 'Go Wild in Your Own Backyard'.

We also provided submissions in response to several ACT Government initiatives, including comments on the Draft ACT Weeds Strategy 2007, and the proposed urban development of the Molonglo Valley. FoAB continues to request that more be done to address the weed problem on the rural lease adjacent to the Snow Gums.

In autumn 2007 FoAB members assisted with making the controlled burn in the Aranda bushland a low impact event. We selectively raked fuel from around the base of significant smooth barked eucalypts and were pleased the outcome.

### **Snow Gums erosion control project**

The focus of our LandKeepers erosion control project in 2007 was on planting and laying logs and rocks to stabilise areas of eroding banks and to slow water flows. We planted 50 *Acacia dealbata* (silver wattle) along the deep gully, and native grasses, matrushes and flax lilies in the flatter eroding areas and drainage lines near the Aranda snow gum woodland. While erosion control was our first priority, we also aimed to replace some of the unwelcome exotic species, and to enhance the habitat values of the site. All the new plants had been grown from seeds collected on site, or nearby.

Although many of the plants suffered during the hot winds and rainfall deficit in September/October, despite mulch, protectors and watering,

we're hoping many will become safely established thanks to the wetter November.

We will be doing a further major planting next weekend (8&9 March 2008) so please come and help if you can.

### **St John's Wort trial**

A significant achievement during the year was the completion of a trial of methods for controlling St John's Wort, undertaken largely by Mary Falconer. The trial found that the dabbing of St John's Wort at their young rosette stage is by far the most effective control treatment. It is much more effective than cutting out plants with a long bladed knife, or cutting and dabbing with Glyphosate the flowering stems at either early or late inflorescence stage.

### **Annual work program**

Our annual work program was implemented to a substantial extent in 2007, with our regular track maintenance and step point monitoring completed, and with weeding and mowing undertaken as resources permitted. Unfortunately the Patterson's Curse flourished in the spring rains, and the Patterson's Curse, Cape Weed and African Love Grass continued to threaten the reserve from surrounding road verges. We tackled the St John's wort, thistles and Hoary Mustard in the reserve but these seemed to be reducing in number, at least in the Snow Gums paddock. We also trialled a patch spray of a large Phalaris patch, with excellent results, and just before the rains in early November, we spread over a wide area *Bothriochloa machra* and *Themeda triandra* seeds that we had collected from elsewhere on the site.

### **'Go Wild in Your Own Backyard' trial**

Friends of Aranda Bushland participated in a weeds awareness project which the ACT Government's Department of Territory and Municipal Services (TaMS) piloted in Aranda in August 2007.

The aim of the 'Go Wild in Your Own Backyard' trial was to educate residents living adjacent to the Aranda bushland about the dangers of common garden plants such as Privet, Cotoneaster, Pyracantha and Broom escaping into the reserve. FoAB members delivered to residents a letter and a questionnaire, several brochures about invasive species, and a packet of local native seeds for garden planting.

Although only a handful of surveys were returned to the Department by November 2007, FoAB noticed a significant spike in sales of *Our*

*Patch* after the trial, which may have been a response to the inclusion of our promotional brochure.

If the ACT Government assesses the project as successful, up to 20 000 Canberrans may participate in the Weeds Awareness Program partnering with other ParkCare groups in future.

### **Parks Week 14th – 21st October 2007**

Many FoAB members provided much appreciated support for a FoAB stall in Remembrance Park behind the War Memorial for the launch of Parks Weeks on 14 October 2007. We provided members to talk with the public, a laminated and captioned photographic display, and offered copies of *Our Patch* and some regional Acacia for sale.

At the stall, FoAB displayed photos from photo archive which has been so carefully established by some of our longest-serving members, Pam and Colin Macdonald. The photo archive includes more than seven hundred digital images spanning the period from some of the first weeding sessions early in the 1990s to recent days, and it continues to grow. The archive was established after Colin and Jim Arnold attended a two day training course provided by the National Library of Australia (NLA) in June 2007. This course for community groups covered the planning, creation and maintenance of digital archives of heritage materials.

### **Our thanks**

FoAB has an active committee and membership, and of course nothing would have been achieved without everyone's enthusiastic and skilled contributions. We rely heavily on our committee, which comprises Jenny Andrews, Jim Arnold, Dave Kelly, Diana Brown, Mary Falconer, Ian Falconer, Hanna Jaireth, Peter Mellor, Peter Ormay, Bill Packard and Wendy Twiss. We also depend on the support of many other organisations.

We are especially grateful for the technical, material and labour support provided by Greening Australia and the ACT Government for the LandKeepers erosion control project, and particularly Angela Calliess (GA), and our main rangers Grant Woodbridge and Peter Mills.

Warren Saunders of Seeds and Plants Australia provided expertise, equipment and extraordinary labour on some planting days, and we sourced some local tubestock from Provincial Native Plants.

We also thank ACT Government ParkCare staff for sponsoring ParkCare members' participation in the ChemCert AQF Cert III accreditation, which Hanna Jaireth attained in 2007.

Bill Packard also continued to provide delicious morning teas which sustained our energy and morale during busy work parties.

Of course we hope to continue to enjoy growing support in 2008-09 from our membership, and government and non-government organisations.

Thank you all.

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